The
Human
Comedy
Honoré de Balzac
BALZAC

Honoré De Balzac
[In his working garb.]

Frontispiece—Volume One.

THE

HUMAN COMEDY

BEING THE BEST NOVELS FROM THE "COMÉDIE HUMAINE" OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

THE PURSE
COUSIN PONS
WHY THE ATHEIST PRAYED
THE MYSTERY OF LA GRANDE BRÉTECHE
ALBERT SAVARUS
THE HOUSE OF THE TENNIS-PLAYING CAT
A TRAGEDY BY THE SEA
MODESTE MIGNON

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIXTEEN ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD FROM THE BEST FRENCH EDITION

WITH AN INTRODUCTION DESCRIPTIVE OF THE AUTHOR'S STUPENDOUS AND BRILLIANT WORK

BY

JULIUS CHAMBERS

IN THREE VOLUMES—VOLUME ONE

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SCENES OF PRIVATE LIFE.

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INTRODUCTION.

BALZAC AND THE COMEDY OF LIFE.

"The magnitude of a plan that embraces at once a study and criticism of society, an analysis of its evils, and a discussion of its principles, justifies me, I think, in giving to my work the title under which it will appear—'The Human Comedy.' It is ambitious, I grant you. But do I not succeed? Here is the work; let the public judge." — Balzac, *in the original Preface to the Complete Edition of his Works. Paris, July, 1842.*

Honoré de Balzac, like Horace, had an excellent opinion of his own work, and never was chary of expressing it. The scheme was too ambitious to be completed in the short span of one life, and he, despite his remarkable energy, failed to fully realize his hopes. His character bristled with eccentricities, and his career was a tissue of contradictions. He was a wild spendthrift, but his appreciation of the value of money in constructing plots, and his skill at financiering—in fiction—are shown in many of his novels.* One thing may be said of him without fear of contradiction: he was a defender of the home; he believed it to be the source of all good, as well as the nest of human misery—the nursery of unhappiness.

From an ethical point of view, Balzac's morals are faultless. He was a realist, as Emil Zola is to-day; but with a refinement of imagination and a facility of mental analysis that Zola does not possess. He hated vulgarity and crime, and made it so odious that several of his most disagreeable books might be issued as religious tracts. A score of biographies of Balzac have been issued, but the editor of the present edition would recommend the one written by Théophile Gautier, the only man of Balzac's day beside Victor Hugo large enough in brain and reputation to write the life of The Master of the Modern Novel. Gautier's biography was written after Balzac's death, and while it is eulogistic, it is fair and justly critical.

In outlining the scope of the wonderful series of books to which Balzac himself refers in the preface to the original edition, quoted above, it is proper to explain exactly what Balzac undertook. He had written and published about thirty novels before he attracted attention; and it was not until 1827 that he conceived the idea of a great work that should dissect the human heart as a demonstrator uses the scalpel in a lecture room. He planned a series of one hundred stories, which he classified under the eight great heads:—Scenes from Private, Provincial, Parisian, Political, Military and Country Life, with Philosophical and Analytical Studies. Of these, the Scenes from Political, Military and Country Life were incomplete at the time of the author's death. The one hundred novels of this series were written in the twenty years between 1827 and 1847. Balzac had a general idea of the plan upon which he was building his great structure, and wrote the stories in whatever order best

* Examples, for instance, "Eugenie Grandet," "César Birotteau," "The Marriage Contract," and "Gaudissart II."

suited his mercurial temperament. The final classification which they were to take in "The Human Comedy" bore no relation whatever to the order in which they were produced. During some of the years he worked with superhuman energy, turning out as many as six or eight complete novels, while in other years he would be satisfied with two or three.

We cannot do better than to give at this stage a complete list of the novels composing this work; and, in addition, we have added to their names the date of original publication, whenever obtainable, to indicate the order in which the books appeared. It has been deemed best to quote the original French titles:—

PLAN OF "LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE."

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE:—La Maison du Chat-qui-pelotte (1829), Le Bal de Sceaux (1829), La Bourse (1832), La Vendetta (1830), Madame Firmiani (1831), Une Double Famille (1830), La Paix du Ménage (1829), La Fausse Maîtresse (1842), Étude de femme (1830), Autre étude de femme (1830), La Grande Bretèche (1830), Albert Savarus (1842), Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées (1841), Une Fille d'Eve (1838), La Femme de Trente Ans (1835), La Femme abandonnée (1832), La Grenadière (1832), Le Message (1832), Gobseck (1830), Le Contrat de Mariage (1835), Un Début dans la Vie (1842), Modeste Mignon (1844), Béatrix (1844), Honorine (1843), Le Colonel Chabert (1832), La Messe de l'Athée (1836), L'Interdiction (1836), Pierre Grassou (1839).

SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE:—Ursule Mirouet (1841), Eugénie Grandet (1833); Les Célibataires:—Pierrette (1839), Le Curé de Tours (1839), and Un Ménage de Garçon (1842); Les Parisiens en Province:—L'illustre Gaudissart (1832), Muse du Département; Les Rivalités:—La Vieille Fille (1836), Le Cabinet des Antiques (1837); Le Lys dans la Vallée (1835); Illusions Perdues:—Les Deux Poëtes, Un grand Homme de Province à Paris, 1st and 2d parts, Eve et David (all in 1843).

SCENES FROM PARISIAN LIFE:—Esther Heureuse, A combien l'amour revient aux Vieillards, Où mènent les mauvais Chemins (all in 1843); La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin, Un Prince de la Bohême (1845). Un Homme d'affaires (1845), Gaudissart II. (1844). Les Comédiens sans le Savoir (1846), Histoir des Treize, Ferragus (1833), Duchesse de Langeais (1834), Fille aux yeux d'Or (1834), Le Père Goriot (1834). César Birotteau (1837). La Maison Nucingen (1837), Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan (1839), Les Employés, Sarrasine (1830), Facino Cane (1836), Les Parents pauvres:—La Cousine Bette (1846), and Le Cousin Pons (1846).

SCENES FROM POLITICAL LIFE:—Une Ténébreuse Affaire (1841), Un Episode sous la Terreur (1831), L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine (1845), Madame de la Chanterie, L'Initié. Z. Marcas (1840), le Député d'Arcis.

SCENES FROM MILITARY LIFE:—Les Chouans (1827), and Une Passion dans le désert (1832).

SCENES FROM COUNTRY LIFE:—Le Médecin de Campagn (1833). Le Curé de Village (1845), and Les Paysans (1847).

PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES:—La Peau de Chagrin (1830), La Recherche de l'Absolu (1834), Christ en Flandre (1831), Melmoth réconcilié (1835), Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu (1832), L'Enfant Maudit (1836), Gambara (1837), Massimilla Doni (1839), Les Marana (1832), Adieu (1830), Le Réquisitionnaire (1831), El Verdugo, Un Drame au bord de la mer (1834), L'Auberge Rouge (1831), L'Elixir de Longue Vie (1830), Maître Cornélius (1831), Sur Catherine de Médicis (1828), Le Martyr Calviniste, La Confidence des Ruggieri, Les deux Rêves, Louis Lambert (1832), Les Proscrits (1831), and Seraphita (1833).

ANALYTICAL STUDIES:—Physiologie du Mariage (1829), and Petites Misères de la vie Conjugale.

From these eight great classes we have selected six, and from each of these six sub-divisions have taken one or more novels. It is unnecessary to say that the choice had to be made with great care, because there are blemishes in some of the works that render them undesirable for translation. "The Human Comedy" contains very little humor—if we except "A Start in Life," in which are the author's own experiences in a lawyer's office, "The Illustrious Gaudissart" and "The Old Maid." Rather does it deal with avarice, covetousness and passion, than the tender emotions of human life. Indeed, this masterpiece of human ingenuity contains more tragedy than comedy.

We can only attempt a few words in relation to each of the stories comprising this stupendous work, covering, in its several editions, from twenty to fifty-three volumes. "The House of the Tennis-Playing Cat" we reprint. "The Ball at Sceaux" is quite well known, the scene being laid at the quaint little village among the hills, thirty miles from Paris, now reached over the crookedest railroad in France. Parisians of to-day

visit the place on Sundays, and remember it chiefly because of the Restaurant Robinson, where dinners are served in little booths, high among the tree-tops. "The Purse" is one of the most charming little bits of innocence and nature in all Balzac. We have chosen to begin these volumes with it, and we think the touch of humanity that permeates it will justify its selection as the opening chapter in "The Human Comedy."

"A Double Family," the next novel in the series, is constructed along the lines made familiar by a host of other writers, but contains so many objectionable features that it is omitted. The plot may be outlined, however: — One family is legitimate, the other illegitimate. The father is a man of integrity, and afterward becomes a distinguished jurist. Balzac shows distinctly how this man was driven from his home by the harshness and coldness of his wife; and, true to his ethical purity, he also makes it clear that the new love was more unworthy of him than the first. The climax is reached when one of the natural sons, who is accused of a serious crime, is brought before one of the legitimate sons, sitting as a legal functionary. The father appears boldly in court and confesses his shame and humiliation. From a French point of view, the novel is supposed to inculcate a highly moral lesson, and the skill with which this story is handled is wonderful. Caroline, the real hero of this tale, is drawn as on a steel plate—so carefully that not a line is wanting.

"Why the Atheist Prayed" is remarkable because in it is told the early life of the great surgeon, Bianchon, who reappears in so many subsequent volumes. For this reason it has been inserted ahead of its order as fixed by the author. "A Second Study of Woman" contains a striking dissertation on the decadence of great families and the disappearance of the society *grande dame* after the Revolution of July, with an etching, made in Balzac's most characteristic style, of the type of woman who succeeded her.

"The Mystery of La Grande Bretèche," an old chateau on the banks of the river Loir, is a bit of condensed horror. Like "A Piece of an Ass's Skin," it may be described as a fantasy and an improbability, such as Poe and Hoffmann delighted to write. Candidly, we do not think these tales ought to be in this series at all, as, with these two exceptions, Balzac deals with the real and moves his characters about in the living current of human life. Of course we do not forget "Ursule Mirouët," who, as the first of the provincial heroines, gives her name to a "goody-goody" story, such as Richardson might have composed, and forms the background for a conventional ghost story. There is no incongruity in the introduction of ghosts into novels depicting human suffering or struggle.

To again take up the chain, as Balzac laid it down, we reach "Albert Savarus," which we have reprinted in full. It contains one of those descriptions of country-town society in which Balzac shone to such great advantage, and the hero and heroine form two very strong figures for an analytical mind such as the author's. Incidentally, it introduces a charming description of life at the Grande Chartreuse, probably the most famous monastery in the world. The next novel in the series is "The History of Two Marriages"—a story of two brides, each the exact antithesis of the other, though educated in the same convent. The style is defective, because Balzac does not show as a master in dealing with story-telling by correspondence. The letters of these young women cover reams of paper in some instances—an error of fact that cannot be overlooked. The book is interesting, just as a case of St. Vitus's dance might be. One of the ladies is perfectly lovable, and the other is utterly detestable. "A Daughter of Eve" relates how a man of the world and a loving husband rescues his young wife from a false position, and saves a scandal through great tact and cleverness.

Passing rapidly over the five short stories that follow, we come to "The Marriage Contract," interest in which

centers about the preparation of the anti-nuptial obligations by two notaries, one of the old and the other of the new school. In this story Balzac shows the results of his legal training, and more especially of his irksome clerical duties in a notary's office. The interests of the about-to-be husband seriously conflict with those of his intended bride, and the young notary, who appears for the young girl's mother (she having dissipated her daughter's fortune), prepares a cunningly baited deception for the bridegroom, which is only foiled by the sagacity of the old and experienced notary. After the wedding, a system of impoverishment begins at once, and the husband is eventually shorn like a lamb. "A Start in Life" further discloses the tricks of the legal profession, and is, in several respects, the most humorous of all the books that Balzac has written. A young man begins life with thoroughly developed vanity, of which he is eventually cured by heroic treatment. It twice proves his ruin in business, but he is finally induced to enter the army, wherein he attains distinction.

"Modeste Mignon" is as near an approach to the English idea of a novel as it would be possible for any Frenchman to write. It is purely and simply a love tale. Mignon might be Susan Jane Jones. She dwells with her blind mother in the strictest seclusion at Havre. Her father is abroad seeking his fortune, and she takes advantage of the blindness of her mother to fall in love with Canalis, a celebrated poet, whose verses are the fad of the day, but whose face she never has seen, except in a shop-window lithograph. She sends him a letter under an assumed name and gets disagreeably entangled. Canalis hands the first letter over to his private secretary to answer. The young man conducts the correspondence with Mignon in his master's name, eventually falls in love with the girl, who finds in the sham poet a far more attractive person than the real one proves to be, when she finally beholds him. Just as the embarrassment is becoming critical, Mignon's father opportunely returns to Havre, rescues her, and the story ends pleasantly with the marriage of the "soft" young girl and the rather too experienced secretary.

Of "Beatrix" very little need be said. Its whole atmosphere is unreal and deceptive. In many respects it is so complicated that it is almost impossible to disentangle the several threads of the story. The book is redeemed by one of Balzac's marvelously clever word paintings of a corner of Brittany, unvisited by strangers prior to the advent of railroads. The tone of the book, however, is thoroughly unworthy of the great author. "Honorine" is a dainty bit of domestic drama of true Parisian character. Briefly, it is the story of a husband who, although deserted by a heartless and unworthy wife years before the tale opens, and herself forsaken in turn, watches over the erring woman and secretly provides for every want of hers. It is the story of a love that could not be destroyed by cruelty or deception. Its weak point is that the honorable and sagacious husband attempts to woo the frivolous woman back to him by deputy, employing a messenger who is utterly unworthy of his confidence. He is successful, and the repentant wife dies at peace.

"Colonel Chabert" is in many respects a *chef d'œuvre.* It ought to be universally known, though it is very painful and sad. He is the French Colonel Newcome, and it is no disparagement of Thackeray to say that Chabert rises to a loftier pinnacle of self-sacrificing manhood than does his hero. The magnanimous Englishman gives up fortune and friends from an exaggerated point of honor and calmly goes to die in an almshouse; Balzac's hero not only sacrifices all these, but name, fame and personal identity, because of an infamous woman, whose conduct had literally disgusted him with life. In this book we have the picture of an honest and skillful lawyer, who appears in many scenes in "The Human Comedy" under the name of Derville. The fate of poor Chabert extorts from Derville the remarkable comment: "There exists," says he, "in society three men who cannot possibly esteem the world: the priest,

the doctor and the lawyer. They wear black, perhaps, because they are in mourning for all the virtues and for all the illusions."

With this comment of an old lawyer upon the three great professions, we may pass to a consideration of the Scenes from Provincial Life, the second grand sub-division of "The Human Comedy," which, Balzac says, "represent the age of passion, scheming, self-interest and ambition." Of "Ursule Mirouët" we have already spoken. Ursule is an orphan, adopted by Dr. Minorel, of Nemours, an amiable old man, with the serious moral defect that he has absolutely no religion whatever. From this condition of confirmed atheism he is converted by his ward, just as he would be in a Sunday-school book. On the doctor's death, a will which was supposed to be in existence, providing for her maintenance, cannot be found because it has been secreted by one of the heirs. At this point the gentle-hearted doctor's shade appears to Ursule and reveals the contemptible conduct of the thief, after which the law makes things easy for the young girl. Incidentally, Ursule is beloved of a very charming young man, and they get married after the fortune is found and "live happily forever after." The fact that the book is dedicated by Balzac to his niece would seem to indicate that it is intended for the consumption of young ladies. The really admirable passages in the book are found in those portions depicting the greediness and the avarice of the relatives of the amiable old doctor to possess themselves of portions of his estate. The next novel in the series is the famous and immortal "Eugenie Grandet," which we reprint in full. Much that is sad and painful might be omitted without sacrificing the beauty of the story. The heartless character of the miserly husband and father is brought out with a painful fullness that makes it in places very distressing reading; but the pictures of the Grandet household can never be forgotten. As a cap-sheaf to these two stories, which have both been sad in several ways, we have "Pierrette." She is a young woman of angelic beauty and saintliness, adopted by two horrible people, an old bachelor and an old maid, brother and sister. Though they are her cousins, they neglect her, persecute her, and finally do her to death. "Pierrette" was dedicated to the wealthy Russian lady, Countess Eva de Hanska, who in 1850 became Balzac's wife. After completing this story it seems quite natural to study the sufferings of "The Curé of Tours," who is only one priest worried by another with devilish ingenuity.

From this point, the ground clears and becomes brighter. In "A Bachelor's Establishment" we see a rich old imbecile completely under the thumb of a pert and pretty young housekeeper. Strange to say, the interest in the story centers wholly in the family of the bachelor's sister. Agathe Bridau, a thoroughly virtuous and amiable woman, is a widow and the mother of two sons. The elder, Philippe, is an officer of the Imperial Guards, and a thoroughly developed blackguard; the younger is a simple-minded artist and an affectionate son. Of course, anybody who has studied life need not be told that Phillipe is the mother's favorite. Her heart goes out to him whenever he is accused of wrongdoing, and she finds a ready explanation for all his waywardness. After ruining his mother, robbing his brother, and causing the death of his aunt, he is put under police surveillance for five years because of his connection with a Bonapartist plot. From that point he develops into a thoroughly hardened villain. He eventually becomes a personage of distinction and very rich, when he naturally evolves the ingratitude that has been latent in his character from the beginning, cuts his mother and brother, and forsakes his wretched wife. True to his ethical instincts, Balzac punishes the scapegrace by giving him a miserable death in Algeria.

Now for a gleam of real comedy. "The Illustrious Gaudissart" is the victim of a hoax, and we extract many a hearty laugh at his expense. The scene of "The Muse of the Department" might be laid in Washington, where there are many of

the frail sisterhood who resemble the heroine of this story. She is not a tragic muse, but a very naughty one. "The Old Maid" is decidedly in a comic vein. An English critic has very truthfully said that this story is "worthy of being the joint production of Stern and Swift, for it combines the naïve drollery of the first with the caustic cynicism of the second." The hero, the Chevalier de Valois, boasts of an enormous nose, wears diamond earrings, stuffs his ears with wool, and gives the most careful attention to his toilet, in the vain hope of persuading the maiden lady to become his wife; but when she refuses him, peremptorily, he goes to pieces like the Deacon's one horse shay. Madame Cormon, though she is an old maid, is good, simple, and hot-blooded, and longs ardently for a husband; but she is so absurdly ignorant that she becomes utterly distrustful of mankind, and defeats her own purpose by her suspicion.

An old maid of another sort appears in "The Cabinet of Antiques." This lady is a patrician who has remained single in order to devote herself to the orphan son of her brother; but the young scapegrace commits forgery, is arrested at Alençon, where the scene of the story is laid. An old notary again saves the honor of the family, and the French system of jurisdiction is again gone into at much too great length. A fact which Balzac always delighted to dwell upon: namely, that it made very little difference to a lawyer whether his client was guilty or innocent, is brought out. In this case the guilt or innocence of the party accused had very little to do with his fate, the influence he was able to bring to bear deciding it.

A thing of real beauty is "The Lily of the Valley." Its author pronounces it "one of the most highly finished stones of the edifice." It deals with the old struggle between love and duty in the breast of a beautiful but unhappy woman. Duty and virtue are ever victorious, although death finally enables the heroine to triumph. Madame de Mortsauf is a model of purity, though a conjugal martyr, and her portrait is painted with pathos and power.

We now reach the "Lost Illusions," presented in two sub-divisions. It is the longest, the most varied, and most completely elaborated work from Balzac's pen. Indeed, several critics have spoken of it as an epitome of the entire "Human Comedy." The four longest stories associated under this head would make a library in themselves. Briefly, this is the story of Lucien, a poet of Angoulême, whose Bunthorn-like genius and manly beauty are supported by the money of his sister Éve, the daughter of a poor widow but the wife of a rich printer, named David. Sechard, David's father, was an ignorant, drunken, miserly old publisher, who sold his business to his son, a talented, modest and amiable young man, on very harsh terms. David believes in Lucien, foresees his greatness and willingly assists in the scheme to exploit him. The young and handsome poet is patronized by Madame de Bargeton, a great lady of the neighborhood, who is naturally bored by the country folk and longs for some idol upon which to lavish her enthusiasm. The relations between the poet and the lady are wholly proper; but the country people are censorious and start a scandal. One of the distinguished citizens, overheard by the husband of madame, is called out and shot in a duel. After this, of course, the atmosphere becomes too warm for the great lady, and she removes to her house in Paris, taking the poet with her. Thus the scene shifts from the country to the French metropolis. The disillusionment of the poet now begins. He finds that Madame de Bargeton is not what his fancy had painted her. Though an exceedingly proper and modest woman in the country, in the city she develops entirely different phases of character. An old flame of hers soon separates her from Lucien. The poet observes that his ideal woman is lean, faded and gawky; the lady likewise discovers that her ideal genius is awkward, ill-bred and badly dressed. Thrown overboard by his patroness, the luckless poet finds it impossible to secure a publisher for his sonnets.

He tries several methods of earning a living when he finds that poetry will not secure it for him, and, among others, journalism. The way in which Balzac writes about Parisian journalism is enough to sicken any reader with it as a vocation. Disclosures in 1892 regarding the Panama Canal scandal indicate that the Paris press is as corrupt to-day as in Balzac's time. Balzac had pretended to edit one or two papers and magazines, but it is very doubtful if he ever did any executive newspaper work. He had no scruples about money-getting, and, like many another amateur in journalism and law, saw a rich field for the blackmailer's art. According to Balzac, any man who ventured into the newspaper profession in Paris was utterly lost to honor, honesty and self-respect. Immediately Lucien has attained a footing on a newspaper, he starts out as a blackmailer and begins to lampoon his former patroness and Monsieur Chatelet, her new infatuation. He flirts with the great actresses of the day, and cuts his former protector in public; but his rise is like the flight of a rocket: he soars for a time among the clouds of adulation and then falls like a stick, extinguished. What else was to have been expected? It is the same way in America. Lucien loses his footing in the newspaper business, as he deserves to, is insulted by a former friend, challenges him and is desperately wounded in a duel; he suffers from penury and despair, and finally returns to Angoulême on foot. The love story of David and Eve, which is used to garnish the greater tale, is far more attractive than that of Lucien. It is impossible to outline it, but Lucien is the cause of much suffering to both of them, and eventually brings financial ruin upon David, his brother-in-law. It is impossible, of course, to give any idea of the life and soul which Balzac imparts to this bare outline. The weakness of Lucien, the unfailing love of Eve, the sincere devotion of David, the miserly craftiness of the old printer, and the frivolity of Madame de Bargeton, supply the human interest in this work.

In the two books that follow, and which are utterly unworthy of Balzac, we find one of the greatest characters in "The Human Comedy." We refer to "The terrible Vautrin." He is the antithesis in French fiction of Jean Valgean, the hero of "Les Miserables," the masterpiece of Victor Hugo. Vautrin, known under several aliases, is a convict who masquerades in the guise of a priest. He crosses the plane of several other novels in the series, memorable among which is "Pere Goriot." This terrible character is really the hero of the two books that follow "Lost Illusions." Falling into the hands of the police eventually, Vautrin chooses to serve the law against which he can no longer successfully contend, and instead of the chief of a gang of robbers he becomes the Chief of Police. We can imagine how Balzac must have chuckled to himself, and how his chubby cheeks must have shaken as he lunged at the municipality with such a master-stroke of irony!

A splendid opportunity to utilize the services of Vautrin occurs in "The History of the Thirteen," which demonstrates the possibility of a cabal of men carrying out their own purposes in utter defiance of the law. New York under the fast set led by Jim Fisk between the years 1865 and 1871 (when he was killed) furnishes a picture quite similar in color to that in "The Girl with the Golden Eyes." New Yorkers who had shuddered at the wantonness and dissipation of the Parisians, revolted against that era and rejoiced that the fall of its figure-head ended the orgies of the period.

Of the Scenes from Parisian, or City, Life, we have reprinted enough to show their wonderful beauty and variety. This division of the work sounds every depth of social horror, exalts every human virtue, and deals in an utterly reckless, though very attractive, manner with the whims, ambitions, malice and sordidness of humanity. As a critic of mankiud Balzac is remorseless! When a woman was bad in Balzac's eyes, she was capable of anything; no meanness that brought revenge, no treachery that deprived a rival

of a lover, no depravity that insured social success was to be hesitated at. "Pere Goriot" (or "Old Pop Goriot," as the argot of the cheap boarding-house where he lived would have had it.) was the incarnation of fatherhood, as understood by the Balzacian mind. His might be another name for Lear, moving in a lower ethical atmosphere, actuated by the same paternal love and without personal ambition. This story, strangely enough, was given a wrong place in the series by the author, because in the point of date we make therein our first acquaintance with Vautrin; we also meet Dr. Bianchon, the noble-hearted physician, and M. Rastignac. Some of these names have been encountered through many of the preceding stories. At least, this book should have been placed by Balzac before the "Lost Illusions." Having despoiled himself of all his property for the benefit of his two worthless daughters, poor old Goriot is left to die alone in a garret. The way in which Balzac wrings the chords of human sympathy for the friendless old man is even more masterly than Shakespeare's treatment of the same situation under the names of Lear, Regan, and Goneril. There is no Cordelia in this tale.

We reprint "César Birotteau," a story of the champion of shop-keeping honor. The full title of this very remarkable story is "The Grandeur and the Decadence of César Birotteau." Birotteau was a manufacturer of perfumery and rose to great wealth, the climax of his social elevation being a ball, which is minutely described: after that event his descent to penury and utter wretchedness follow fast and fearfully. The mental sufferings that the honest old tradesman endured are depicted with photographic accuracy. The book ends happily, however, by the payment of Birotteau's debts, and his resumption of active life. When this occurs, his joy is more extravagant than was his grief. It kills him. We have included the mystery of "Facino Cane" in this class for the same reason, doubtless, that Balzac did—not because it is a Parisian story but merely because it is related in a café of that city. Out the noxious quagmire of the "Cousin Betty" (which we dare not reproduce) appears the figure of a true and much-abused wife, but the rest of the tale, although one of the most popular in France, exposes the social corruptions as mercilessly as does Zola in "La Terre."

"Cousin Pons" has been frequently translated; it is moral and quite interesting. We have included it in these volumes among the Scenes from Private Life because of several characters therein who make their first appearance in this story.

"A Mysterious Affair," with which the Scenes in Political Life open, contains one of Balzac's most remarkable heroines, Laurence de Cinq Cygne. Not only is she beautiful but she is courageous. Though thoroughly womanly in her heroism, she is masculine in her endurance. She is a sort of Jean d'Acre in society. The whole story is decidedly tragic, but full of pathos rather than horror. In "The Wrong Side of Contemporaneous History" Balzac again exalts virtue—"plain virtue," as he calls it—in the person of Mademoiselle de Chanterie, in many ways the most sublime woman in "The Human Comedy." Unhappy as a wife, wretched as a mother, persecuted by everybody, apparently forgotten by God, she never despairs of man or doubts the Almighty; she sinks her own misery in the divine mission of charity. "Z. Marcas" is a curious little story, the chief interest in which to Americans will grow out of the fact that Balzac discovered the name on a sign during one of his midnight walks, rushed home and wrote the story at one sitting out of the phantasmagoria that the name had conjured up.

The Scenes from Military Life, which we reprint in full, consist of one splendid story and a fragment. Balzac's declared intention to complete that portion of his work was unfortunately prevented by death. "Les Chouans" is a story of the revolution in the Vendée, and is filled with incidents of that semi-barbaric struggle. We reprint Mr. George Saintsbury's masterly translation. The blind devotion of the ignorant but frantically loyal peasants is wonderfully portrayed, together

with the chivalrous heroism of the Royalist chieftain. When we remember that Balzac was a Monarchist who would have enjoyed the era of Louis XIV., we cannot wonder at his frequent exultation of the Royalists at the expense of the Republicans. A passionate and exciting love intrigue is interwoven with the Vendéan war, which in many ways relieves it of its horrors. The "Passion in the Desert" is a mere fragment, and we reprint it only on account of its weirdness and its absolute originality. Balzac refers to the story as that of "A Frenchman in Egypt." We have inserted "Doomed to Live," an episode of the Peninsular War, in this division.

In the Scenes of Country Life, which, Balzac declares, represent the evening of life, we have three tales, of which "The Country Doctor" is the first. It is really a long and rather dull essay on philanthropy and good local government, illustrated by the history of the conversion of a wretched village into a busy, thriving and populous district by the benevolence and energy of the country doctor. "The Curé of the Village" is somewhat similar in idea but more complicated, and is rendered very readable by the introduction of a mysterious crime. "The Peasantry," which completes the Scenes of Country Life, is in many ways remarkable. We have reprinted it in full. A very rich landed proprietor, the Count Montcornet, who dwells upon an extensive estate, has incurred the jealousy of the surrounding peasantry. They unite in a concerted plot to drive him out of their country and to secure the sub-division of his immense domain. The count is an old soldier of Napoleon, and, as may be imagined, is not disposed to surrender readily. He makes a long and gallant fight, in which he is always in the right, but the insidious and secret methods employed by his antagonists are such that he is finally defeated, robbed and cast out upon the world a wanderer. The peasantry stop at no means to secure their ends. The insatiable greed of the richer class of peasants is drawn with an etcher's art. So graphic is the narrative that it suggests in the reader's mind the picture of the count in the center of a great web, surrounded by a host of vicious and remorseless spiders intent upon his destruction. M. Gaboreau imitated this story in "La Clique d'Or." There is more instruction in "The Peasantry" than in any other one volume in "The Human Comedy." It was the author's last work, and is really the climax of his scheme.

The Philosophical and Analytical studies that follow are mere epilogues. "The Bit of Ass's Skin" has been before referred to. It is a story of the Poe order, something like this: — A young man, about to commit suicide, becomes possessed of a talisman that will gratify every wish, but at each exercise of desire the piece of ass's skin, which serves as a talisman, contracts, and as it shrinks so does his life. He accepts the conditions very much as Faust made his compact with the devil. Being on the verge of the grave, anything that bettered his condition seemed welcome. The talisman proves to be a gift from the Evil One, and its recipient goes the same way as his famous predecessor in the realm of fiction. He grows to love life, and as the shagreen shrinks smaller and smaller he struggles against his fate, like a poor wretch strapped in the electric chair at Sing Sing. The fact that the story is an impossibility condemns it as a part of "The Human Comedy." The "Researches into the Absolute" errs on the opposite side of simplicity and is wanting in romantic interest. It is full of metaphysics, and deals with a search for the philosopher's stone. The book has often been translated and is so well known that we do not feel justified in reproducing it in these volumes. Marguerite Claës, daughter of the monomaniac, is a fine specimen of filial love. We reprint four of the shorter stories in this sub-division, though we have taken the liberty of inserting them among the six other divisions. "Louis Lambert" is a Swedenborgian rhapsody, chiefly interesting as an example of Balzac's varied study and wide range of reading.

The Analytical studies deal with the miseries of married life, and they are so un-American in treatment that they would have no interest whatever to our readers. Balzac regarded the marriage state as one of constant antagonism, and believed that the feud always existed, open or hidden. In America, marriage is regarded as a sacred and beautiful institution, sanctioned of God and blessed by man, and we cannot understand the phases of French life in which love-matches are rare and marriage is a matter of convenience and arbitration.

In the running review, which we have here concluded, of Balzac's Comedy of Human Life, we believe we have shown the stupendous scope of the work, the great variety of topics and characters treated, and have, in a measure, at least, combated the prevalent opinion that Balzac was essentially an immoral writer. He found French society in a very disorganized condition, and he wrote of it as he found it. Like a Napoleon in the field of letters, he rose from the social disintegration that followed the Revolution, and he described the French people as they were, always leaning to the side of monarchy because he sincerely believed that the stronger the government the more secure the individual. He was an industrious workman and, as one of his most severe critics said of him, "was too laborious a slave to the pen to find time to be personally immoral."

The translations have been made by Mr. George Saintsbury, the distinguished English scholar and critic; E. P. Robins, Mrs. Frederick M. Dey, Mrs. B. M. Sherman, and the editor.

The publisher and editor of this edition of Balzac take pride in saying that it does not contain a word that can do harm, and they have great pleasure in bringing to the acquaintance of many thousand American readers this Shakespeare of prose fiction, whose imperishable name will grow brighter with each new century.

JULIUS CHAMBERS.

NEW YORK, *January 1, 1893.*

THE AUTHOR'S LIFE.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC was born at Tours on the 20th of May, 1799. There was no authority for the aristocratic *de* in his name. He inserted it himself. He was a dreaming and solitary child, refusing to play with his two sisters, and taking no notice of the toys that were given him. There was one exception; he would spend hours in a sort of ecstasy playing on a violin, the strains he produced, discordant to others, sounding to him divine melodies. This passion for music he retained all his life; two of his philosophic studies on the subject, "Gambara" and "Massimilla Doni," are among his most delicate work. His faculty for reading showed itself at the age of five, when he read the Holy Scriptures with absorbing interest. He possessed himself with great rapidity of the contents of every book that fell into his hands. Science, philosophy, and religion were his principal study, and he even read dictionaries from end to end. He was sent to the Oratorian College at Vendôme; while there, at the age of eleven, he wrote a treatise on the Will, which his teacher, with the true instinct of a schoolmaster, burned. He would also contrive to be punished in the lock-up, in order to devote himself at leisure to the books he preferred. To his reminiscences of these days are due his marvelous production, "Louis Lambert." His memory retained the minutest details, consequently this excessive reading produced a sort of congestion in an undeveloped brain. At the age of fourteen he was apparently so stupefied that it was necessary to remove him from school. Yet he already had glimpses of his future fame. "You will see," he once said to his sisters, "some day I shall be famous."

About this time, in 1813, the family removed to Paris, where young Balzac was sent to a well-known "pensionnat." At the age of eighteen he received the diplomas of bachelor and of licentiate of letters, and then went through the courses of law at the Sorbonne and the College of France, simultaneously. Meanwhile, in obedience to his parents, he worked in the office of an advocate, and afterward of a notary.

As he was completing his twenty-first year, his parents required him to adopt the profession of a notary; this he absolutely refused to do, declaring that he had long made up his mind to be an author.

"Do you know," said his father, "that in literature if a man is not a master he is a mere 'hack'?"

"Then I will be a master," said he.

Finding it impossible to move him, his parents returned to the country, leaving him with a very small allowance alone in Paris.

His way of life and his privations at this time are graphically described in his letters to his favorite sister Laure, afterward Madame de Surville. His first garret was in the Rue de Lesdiguières. He frequently did not go out for weeks at a time farther than the nearest grocer, and that only in order to buy coffee, which he consumed at night while he read or wrote. He had scarcely any fire, even in winter, and very little to eat. From the hard life that he led at this time he contracted a tendency to violent attacks of toothache, recurring all through his life.

His first literary production was a drama called "Cromwell," which he read to a company of friends; they pronounced it worthless. After this he published, chiefly under fictitious names, about thirty novels, ten of which are now included under the title "Works of Youth."

At the age of twenty-five, as his pen did not bring in sufficient to keep him, he resolved to make enough by other means to enable him to write as he willed. He borrowed funds from an old college friend, and started a publishing business, but owing to lack of interest with the booksellers it failed. His friend, not discouraged, lent him more money, and his father, pleased that he was starting on another career, added thirty thousand francs. With this capital he opened a printing-house in the Rue Marais-Saint-Germain, where he set up twelve presses and a type foundry. Under his direction the most assiduous labor was expended on every part of the establishment. Soon after, the severe laws of the Restoration restricting the liberty of the press were enacted, and ruined the undertaking.

He was thus forced to return to literature, not only in order to live, but to pay the debts which he had contracted in trade. He was overburdened with debt until the last year of his life. Among the books in his library was one bound like his own works, bearing the title "La Tragédie Humaine;" it contained an account of his expenditures.

In 1827 he published, under the editorship of a kindly "libraire," Monsieur Levavasseur, the first book that was well received, "Les Chouans." He now devoted himself entirely to the work of his life—a history of the manners of his time. As Dante has followed the development of God's counsels in the "Commedia," called by posterity "divine," so Balzac has laboriously analyzed the machinery of human society in his "Comédie Humanie." Nor did his literary work end with this vast idea; he started at least two reviews, was the author of numerous articles, four dramas, and many grotesque tales after the manner of his great countryman Rabelais. These last are collected in three volumes under the title of "The Droll Stories."

The care and labor which he expended on his works was immense. He wrote the outline of his story down the middle of a very wide sheet of paper, filled it in both sides with additions, and then sent it to be printed. This method he repeated until he was satisfied. It is known that the proofs of one of his stories ("Pierrette") were thus corrected seventeen times; the cost of correction amounted to three or four hundred francs more than was realized by the sale of the book. His mode of working was the despair of the

compositors, who used to stipulate in their agreements that they should never be kept at work on Monsieur de Balzac's manuscripts for more than two hours at a time.

His characters were to him, as they become to his readers, living realities. "Come," said he one day at his sister's when the conversation had turned on the doings of some acquaintances or political personages, "let us now talk about *real* people and real sorrows; let us talk of 'Eugénie Grandet,'" and he proceeded to discuss the lovely characters in "La Comédie Humaine." The number of persons in that great work amounts to five thousand, many of them appearing or referred to again and again in different stories.

In person Balzac was handsome, strong, and healthy; his capacity for enduring fatigue enormous. The portrait used in this volume is from the first complete Paris edition of "The Human Comedy." Though he was continually harassed by his creditors, a moment of joy made him forget weeks of anxiety. The charm of his personality and his persuasiveness were so extraordinary that he induced men of sober judgment to consent to the wildest schemes. These he was perpetually occupied in inventing in order to get rich; now it was the finding of the great Mogul's jewel, now it was a mine or the cultivation of opium in Corsica, now it was the discovery of perpetual motion, and now a plan for destroying the credit of the German banking-houses. It is remarkable that two of his schemes actually made the fortune of persons to whom he incautiously intrusted them. He was a man easily deceived and incapable of deception.

In 1834 he became a candidate for the Académie. This enlightened institution rejected him with the excuse that his affairs were not in a flourishing state. There could scarcely be a more startling example of the futility of State establishments for the encouragement of literature or art.

The anecdotes told of Balzac are countless. A recent volume entitled "An Englishman in Paris" is larded with them. His strange appearance and unusual habits have made his personality attractive and familiar. During the time that he was writing a story he used to go to bed at half-past five, after his dinner, and got up at eleven or twelve. Then, clad in the monastic habit which he had adopted as a dressing-gown, he wrote until nine in the morning. When he was not writing he frequently spent the night walking about Paris or in the country, just as Dickens walked about London and the Kentish hills.

In the year 1850 his dreams of wealth were realized; he married a rich Russian lady, the Countess Eva de Hanska, to whom he had dedicated "Pierrette" ten years before. But close on the heels of riches came death. Feeling his strength fail him he hurried to Paris, and died there four months after his marriage, in the same year, 1850.

In religious opinion he was a pronounced Catholic; in politics a decided Monarchist.

This greatest writer of modern fiction in any language has been little known to Americans.

SCENES OF PRIVATE LIFE.

I.

THE PURSE.

There is a delicious moment for minds given to expansion—the moment when night exists not yet, and day exists no longer; when the glimmering twilight casts over every object its soft tints or its fantastic reflections, and invites a reverie vaguely wedded with the play of light and shade. The silence which almost always reigns at this instant renders it more particularly dear to the artist, who, collecting his thoughts, places himself at some paces from his work, on which he can labor no longer, and criticises it, growing enraptured with the subject, whose true significance flashes then on the inner eye of genius. He who has not stood pensive by the side of a friend during this moment of poetic dreams, can with difficulty comprehend its unspeakable privileges. Favored by the *clair obscur,* the material means employed by art to produce the effect of realities disappear entirely. If it is a picture, the personages represented seem to walk and talk; the shade becomes shadow, the light daylight, the flesh is alive, the eyes move, the blood runs in the veins, and the dress stuffs glisten. Imagination comes to the aid of every detail and sees only the beauties of the work. At this hour illusion reigns despotically, to be dispelled, perhaps, by nightfall. Is not illusion a sort of mental night which we people with visions? Then, illusion spreads her wings; she carries off the soul into a world of fancies, a world fertile in voluptuous caprices, and where the artist forgets the world positive, yesterday and to-morrow, the future, everything, even to his troubles, light and heavy.

At this magic hour, a young painter—a man of talent, who followed his art for the sake of art alone—had mounted on the double ladder he made use of to paint a large, tall picture, almost finished. There, criticising and admiring himself in good faith, floating on the current of his thoughts, he sank into one of those meditations which enchant and exalt the soul, caressing and consoling it. His reverie doubtless lasted long. Night fell. Whether he had intended to come off the ladder, or whether he had made an imprudent movement, fancying himself on the floor—for the result did not permit him to have a very clear idea of the cause of his accident—he fell. His head struck on a stool; he lost consciousness, and remained without movement during a lapse of time whose duration was unknown to him. A soft voice awoke him from the species of torpor in which he was plunged. As soon as he reopened his eyes, the sight of a bright light made him quickly shut them again; but through the veil which enveloped his senses, he could hear the whispering of two women, and feel two young, two timid hands, on which his head reposed. He soon regained consciousness, and was able to perceive, by the glimmer of one of those old lamps called *à double courant d'air,* the most delicious young girl's head he had ever seen—one of these heads which often pass

for a caprice of the pencil, but which suddenly realized for him those theories of ideal beauty each artist creates for himself, and from which he derives his talent. The countenance of the unknown belonged, so to speak, to the fine and delicate type of the school of Prudhon, and possessed also the poetry with which Girodet endows his fancy portraits. The freshness of the temples, the regularity of the eyebrows, the purity of the outlines, the chastity strongly stamped on every feature of this countenance, made of the young girl a perfect creature. Her figure was slight and supple; the contour was delicate. Her dress, plain and clean, announced neither riches nor poverty. On coming to himself, the painter expressed his admiration by a look of surprise, and murmured some confused thanks. He found his forehead bound with a handkerchief, and recognized, notwithstanding the peculiar odor of an atelier, the strong smell of ether, doubtless used to restore him from his swoon; and at length he saw an old woman, who looked like a *marquise* of the *ancien régime*, and was holding the lamp and giving directions to the young unknown.

"Sir," replied the young girl to one of the inquiries made by the painter during the moment in which he was still a prey to all the confusion of ideas produced by his fall, "my mother and I heard the noise of your fall on the floor, and we thought we distinguished a groan. The silence which succeeded alarmed us, and we made haste up. Finding the key in the door, we fortunately ventured in, and found you stretched on the ground without motion. My mother went to get everything necessary to make a bandage and restore you. You are wounded on the forehead—there. Do you feel it?"

"Yes, now," said he.

"Oh, it will be nothing," put in the old mother. "Your head, luckily, struck against this model."

"I feel infinitely better," replied the painter. "I only want a cab to return home. The *portier* will go and fetch me one."

He wanted to reiterate his thanks to the two unknown; but at every speech the old lady interrupted him with, "Take care you put on some leeches to-morrow, sir, or have yourself bled; take some medicine; take care of yourself. Falls are dangerous."

The young girl glanced stealthily at the painter and at the pictures in the atelier. Her countenance and her looks revealed a perfect modesty; her curiosity was rather absence of mind, and her eyes seemed to express that interest which women take, with such graceful impulsiveness, in all our misfortunes. The two unknown seemed to forget the painter's works in the presence of the painter's sufferings. When he had reassured them as to his state, they left, after examining him with a solicitude equally devoid of obtrusiveness and familiarity, without asking any indiscreet questions, or seeking to inspire him with a desire to become acquainted with them. Their actions were marked with an exquisite simplicity and good taste. Their manners, noble yet simple, produced at first little effect on the painter; but afterward, when he was thinking over all the circumstances of this event, he was much struck by them.

On arriving at the floor below that on which the atelier of the painter was situated, the old lady exclaimed softly, "Adelaïde, you have left the door open."

"It was to come to my assistance," replied the painter, with a smile of gratitude.

"You came down just now, mother," answered the young girl, blushing.

"Shall we accompany you to the bottom?" said the mother to the painter. "The staircase is dark."

"Thank you, madame, I am much better."

"Take hold of the banister."

The two women remained on the mat to light the young man, listening to the sound of his footsteps.

In order to explain how attractive and unexpected this scene was to the painter, we must add that he had been only a few days installed in his atelier at the top of this house, situated in the darkest and

muddiest part of the Rue de Suresnes, almost in front of the Church of the Madeleine, a few steps from his apartments, which were in the Rue des Champs Elysées. The celebrity he had acquired by his talents having rendered him one of the artists dearest to France, he was just getting beyond the reach of want, and enjoying, to use his own expression, his last privations. Instead of going to work in one of those ateliers situated near the barriers, whose moderate rent had formerly been in proportion to the modesty of his earnings, he had satisfied a wish of daily recurrence by saving himself a long walk and a loss of time become more precious than ever to him.

Nobody in the world would have inspired more interest than Hippolyte Schinner, if he would have consented to make himself known ; but he did not lightly disclose the secrets of his life. He was the idol of a poor mother who had brought him up at the price of the hardest privations. Mademoiselle Schinner, the daughter of an Alsatian farmer, had never been married. Her tender heart had once been cruelly outraged by a rich man, who did not pride himself on any great delicacy in his amours. The day on which this young girl, in all the splendor of her beauty and in all the pride of her life, underwent, at the expense of her heart and its fairest illusions, that disenchantment which comes upon us so slowly and yet so sharply (for we try to postpone as long as possible our belief in evil, and it always seems to come too suddenly)—this day was a whole age of reflections, and it was also a day of religious ideas and of resignation. She refused the alms of the man who had deceived her, renounced the world, and made her fault her pride. She gave herself up entirely to maternal love, seeking in that, instead of the enjoyments of society to which she had bidden adieu, all her pleasures. She lived by her labor, accumulating a treasure in her son ; and later on, one day, one hour repaid her for all the long and slow sacrifices of her poverty. At the last Exhibition, her son had received the cross of the Legion of Honor. The papers, unanimous in favor of an unknown talent, resounded still with sincere praises. The artists themselves recognized Schinner as a master, and the dealers covered his pictures with gold.

At five and twenty, Hippolyte Schinner, to whom his mother had transmitted her woman's nature, understood better than ever his position in the world. Wishing to restore his mother to the enjoyments of which society had so long deprived her, he lived for her, hoping by dint of glory and fortune to see her, one day, happy, rich, esteemed, and surrounded by celebrated men. Thus, Schinner had chosen his friends from the most honorable and distinguished men. Particular in the choice of his acquaintance, he wished still further to elevate his position, which his talent had already raised so high. By forcing him to remain in solitude, the mother of great ideas, the hard work to which he had been devoted from his youth had allowed him to retain the simple faith which embellishes the first season of our life. His youthful mind was not unacquainted with any one of the thousand forms of chastity which make the young man a being apart, whose heart abounds in felicities, in poesies, in virgin desires, weak in the eyes of worn-out natures, but profound because they are simple. He was endowed with those soft and polished manners which become the mind so well, and seduce even those who cannot understand them. He was well made. His voice, which sprang from the heart, touched the noble sentiments of other hearts, and bore witness to a true modesty by a certain candor of accent. On looking at him, you felt yourself drawn toward him by one of those moral attractions which the *savants*, fortunately, cannot analyze ; they would find in it some phenomenon of galvanism, or the action of some unknown fluid, and would regulate our sentiments by the proportions of oxygen and electricity. These details will perhaps enable people of a bold character, and men famed for their neckties, to understand why, during the absence of the *portier*, whom he had

sent to the bottom of the Rue de la Madeleine for a cab, Hippolyte Schinner did not ask a single question of the *portière* about the two persons who had shown him so much good nature. But, although he only answered "Yes" and "No" to the questions, natural in such a case, which were asked him by this woman about his accident and the friendly interference of the lodgers who occupied the fourth floor, he could not prevent her from obeying the instinct of a porter; she would talk to him about the two unknown, in the interests of her policy, and according to the subterranean judgment of her lodge.

"Ah!" said she, "it was, no doubt, Mademoiselle Leseigneur and her mother, who have been living here four years. We don't know yet what these ladies are. In the morning, an old charwoman, who is as deaf and talks as much as a stone wall, comes to do for them up to twelve o'clock; in the evening, two or three old gentlemen, decorated* like you, sir—and one of them has got his carriage and servants, and is worth sixty thousand francs a year, they say—come to see them, and sometimes stop very late. Altogether they are very quiet tenants, like you, sir; and, besides, they are economical, and live on almost nothing. Directly a letter comes, they pay for it. It's queer, sir, that the mother goes by a different name to the daughter. Ah! when they go to the Tuileries, mademoiselle is very smart, and never goes out without being followed by the young fellows; but she shuts the door in their face, and quite right too. The landlord would not allow—"

The cab came up; Hippolyte heard no more, and returned home. His mother, to whom he related his adventure, redressed his wound, and did not allow him to go to his atelier the next day. After a consultation, divers prescriptions were given, and Hippolyte remained three days in the house. During this seclusion, his unoccupied imagination reproduced in lively colors, and, as it were, in fragments, the details of the scene which followed his fainting. The profile of the young girl stood out strongly on the background of his inner vision. He saw the withered face of the mother, or felt again the hands of Adelaïde; he recalled a gesture which had not struck him at first, but whose exquisite grace was thrown into relief by recollection; then an attitude, or the tone of a melodious voice embellished by the perspective of memory, suddenly reappeared like an object which, after sinking to the bottom of the water, returns to the surface. And so, the first day he could resume work, he returned earlier to the atelier; but the visit he was incontestibly entitled to pay his neighbors was the true cause of his haste. He had already forgotten his half-painted picture. At the moment when passion throws off its swaddling clothes, it falls into those inexpressible pleasures which those who have loved can understand. Thus, some people will know why the painter slowly mounted the stairs of the fourth floor, and will be in the secret of the palpitations which rapidly succeeded each other in his heart, the moment he saw the brown door of the modest apartments inhabited by Mademoiselle Leseigneur. This young girl, who did not bear the name of her mother, had awoke a thousand sympathies in the breast of the young painter; he tried to see a similarity of position between her and himself, and endowed her with the misfortunes of his own origin.

Even while at work, Hippolyte gave himself up very complacently to thoughts of love, and made a great deal of noise to compel the two ladies to think about him as he was thinking of them. He stayed very late at the atelier, dined there, and then, about seven o'clock, went down to see his neighbors.

No painter of manners has dared to initiate us, perhaps from modesty, into the really curious interiors of certain Parisian existences—into the secrets of those dwellings from which issue such fresh and elegant toilets, such brilliant

* *Decoré*—wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor or some other order.

women, who, rich out of doors, betray on all sides at home the signs of an equivocal fortune. If the picture is here too candidly drawn, if you find it too much spun out, do not accuse the description which is, so to speak, incorporated with the story; for the aspect of the apartments inhabited by his two neighbors had a great deal of influence on the sentiments and hopes of Hippolyte Schinner.

The house belonged to one of those landlords in whom there exists a profound horror of repairs and embellishments, one of those men who consider their position of a Parisian landlord as a trade. In the great chain of moral species, these people hold a middle place between the miser and the usurer. Optimists by calculation, they are all faithful to the *statu quo* of Austria. If you talk about moving a cupboard or a door, or opening the most necessary of ventilators, their eyes sparkle, their bile is stirred up, they rear like frightened horses. When the wind blows down some of their chimney-pots, they fall ill, and abstain from going to the Gymnase or the Porte St. Martin on account of repairs. Hippolyte, who, on account of certain embellishments to be made in his atelier, had had *gratis* a comic scene with the Sieur Molineux, was not astonished at the dark and greasy shades, the oily tints, the spots, and other disagreeable accessories which decorated the wooden fittings. Besides, these stigmas of poverty are not without poetry in the eyes of an artist.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur came herself to open the door. On recognizing the young painter, she bowed to him; and at the same time, with Parisian dexterity and the presence of mind given by pride, she turned to close the door of a glazed partition, through which Hippolyte might have caught sight of some linen hanging on the ropes above the economical stove, an old folding-bed, the *braise*, the coals, the flat-irons, the filter, the crockery, and all the utensils peculiar to small establishments. Tolerably clean muslin curtains carefully concealed this *capharnaum*—a word used to designate familiarly these species of laboratories—badly lighted besides by a borrowed light from a neighboring courtyard. With the rapid glance of an artist, Hippolyte perceived the destination, the furniture, the general effect, and the state of this first room cut in two. The honorable part, which served at once as antechamber and dining-room, was papered with an old "aurora-colored" paper, with a velvet border, no doubt manufactured by Reveillon, the holes and spots in which had been carefully hidden with wafers. Prints, representing the battles of Alexander by Lebrun, but in worn-out gilt frames, symmetrically adorned the walls. In the middle of this room was a solid mahogany table, of old-fashioned shape, and worn at the edges. A small stove, whose upright, unbent pipe was scarcely perceptible, stood in front of the fireplace, which was turned into a cupboard. By an odd contrast, the chairs displayed some vestiges of past splendor; they were of carved mahogany, but the red morocco of the seat, the gilt nails, and gimp showed scars as numerous as those of a sergeant of the Old Guard. This room served as a museum for certain things which are only met with in these sorts of amphibious households, objects without a name, partaking at once of luxury and poverty.

Among other curiosities, Hippolyte remarked a magnificently ornamental telescope, hanging above the little greenish glass which decorated the chimney. To match this strange piece of furniture, there was a shabby buffet, painted like mahogany—the wood of all others most difficult to imitate—between the chimney and the partition. But the red * and slippery floor, the little bits of shabby carpet placed before the chairs, the furniture, everything, shone with that laborious cleanliness which lends a false luster to old things, while showing up still more strongly their defects, their age, and long service. There reigned in this room an indefinable odor, resulting from the exhalations of the *capharnaum*, mixed with

* In the old-fashioned houses of Paris the floors were sometimes of red tiles, and never carpeted all over.

the vapors of the dining-room and the staircase, although the window was left open and the street air stirred the muslin curtains, which were carefully drawn in order to hide the embrasure, where preceding tenants had left signs of their presence in divers incrustations or species of domestic frescoes.

Adelaïde quickly opened the door of the other room, into which she introduced the painter with a certain pleasure. Hippolyte, who had formerly seen in his mother's time the same signs of indigence, remarked them with the singular vivacity which characterizes the first acquisitions of memory, and entered, far better than another could have done, into the details of this existence. On recognizing the familiar objects of his infancy, this good young man felt neither contempt for this hidden misery, nor pride in the luxury he had just won for his mother.

"Well, sir, I hope you do not feel the effects of your fall," said the old mother, rising from an old-fashioned easy-chair placed at the corner of the chimney, and offering him a seat.

"No, madame. I am come to thank you for your kind offices, and particularly mademoiselle, who heard me fall."

In making this speech, stamped with the adorable stupidity which springs from the first embarrassment of real love, Hippolyte looked at the young girl. Adelaïde was lighting the lamp *à double courant d'air,* no doubt in order to render invisible a candle stuck in a large brass candlestick, and ornamented with some striking designs by an extraordinary guttering. She bowed slightly, went to put the candlestick in the antechamber, returned to place the lamp on the chimney, and sat down by her mother, a little behind the painter, in order to be able to look at him at her ease, while appearing very much occupied with the burning up of the lamp, whose flame, damped by the moisture of a dull glass, sputtered and struggled with a black and badly cut wick. Seeing the large glass which adorned the chimney, Hippolyte quickly cast his eyes on it to admire Adelaïde. Thus, the little ruse of the young girl only served to embarrass them both.

While talking to Madame Leseigneur—for Hippolyte gave her this name at all hazards—he examined the drawing-room, but decently and stealthily. You could scarcely see the Egyptian figures of the iron andirons in a hearth full of cinders, on which two brands tried to keep together before a sham log of brick, buried as carefully as the treasure of a miser. An old Aubusson carpet, much mended, much faded, and as well-worn as a pensioner's coat, did not cover all the floor, which struck cold to the feet. The walls were ornamented with a reddish paper, representing a China silk with a yellow pattern. In the middle of the wall, opposite the windows, the painter saw a chink and the break produced in the paper by the two doors of an alcove, in which Madame Leseigneur slept, no doubt, which were scarcely masked by a sofa placed before them. Opposite the chimney, over a mahogany chiffonier of a style not without richness and good taste, hung the portrait of a soldier of high rank, which the feeble light did not allow the painter to see distinctly, but, from what he could perceive, he fancied this frightful daub must have been painted in China. At the windows, the red silk curtains were as discolored as the red and yellow tapestry of the furniture of this double-functioned room. On the marble of the chiffonier stood a valuable malachite salver, containing a dozen coffee-cups magnificently painted, and manufactured, no doubt, at Sèvres. On the mantelpiece figured the eternal clock of the empire, a warrior guiding the four horses of a chariot, whose wheel bears at every spoke the number of an hour. The wax candles in the candelabra were turned yellow by the smoke, and at each corner of the mantelpiece was a porcelain vase surmounted by flowers, full of dust and garnished with moss. In the middle of the room, Hippolyte remarked a card-table all prepared, with some new cards on it. There was something inexpressibly affecting to an observer in the sight

of this poverty painted like an old woman who tries to make her face lie. At this spectacle, every man of sense would have proposed to himself secretly, and from the beginning, this species of dilemma: either these two women are honesty itself, or they live by intrigue and play. But on looking at Adelaïde, a young man as pure as Schinner would believe in the most perfect innocence, and attribute the incongruities of this furnishing to the most honorable causes.

"My child," said the old lady to the young girl, "I am cold; make up the fire, and give me my shawl."

Adelaïde went into the adjacent room, where, no doubt, she slept, and returned, bringing to her mother a cashmere shawl which must have cost a great deal when it was new, for the pattern was Indian; but, old, faded, and full of darns, it harmonized with the furniture. Madame Leseigneur put it on very artistically, and with the tact of an old woman who wishes the truth of her words to be believed. The young girl ran nimbly to the *capharnaum*, and reappeared with a handful of small wood, which she threw boldly on the fire to make it burn up.

It would be difficult to transcribe the conversation which took place between these three persons. Guided by the tact almost always acquired by a childhood spent in misfortune, Hippolyte carefully avoided the least observation relative to the position of his neighbors, seeing around him the symptoms of an embarrassment so badly disguised. The most simple question might have been indiscreet, unless from the mouth of an old friend. Nevertheless, the painter was profoundly affected by this hidden misery; his generous heart suffered; but, knowing how offensive any kind of pity, even the most friendly, may appear, he felt ill at ease from the discordance which existed between his thoughts and his words. The two ladies talked at first about painting, for women divine so well the secret embarrassment of a first visit; perhaps they feel it themselves, and their feminine instinct furnishes them with a thousand resources for putting an end to it. While questioning the young man about the material process of his art, and about his studies, Adelaïde and her mother inspired him with courage to talk. The indefinable workings of their conversation, animated with benevolence, led on Hippolyte quite naturally to let fall remarks or reflections which indicated the nature of his habits and his heart.

Grief had prematurely aged the face of the old lady, doubtless handsome in its day; but there remained nothing but the striking features, the outline—in a word, the skeleton of a countenance which, taken altogether, indicated great refinement; much grace in the play of the eyes, which recalled the expression peculiar to the women of the old court, and which no words can define. These features, so small and so refined, might just as well denote an evil disposition, and indicate feminine cunning and craft carried to a high degree of perversity, as reveal the delicacy of a noble mind. In fact, the feminine physiognomy is so far embarrassing to common observers, that the difference between frankness and duplicity, between the spirit of intrigue and the spirit of honor, is imperceptible. The man endowed with penetrating insight divines the imperceptible shades produced by a profile more or less bold, a dimple more or less hollow, a feature more or less arched or prominent. The appreciation of these diagnostics is entirely in the domain of intuition, which alone can discover what everybody is interested in concealing. It was the same with the countenance of the old lady as with the apartments she inhabited; it seemed as difficult to tell whether their poverty sheltered viciousness or strict probity, as to decide whether the mother of Adelaïde was an old coquette, accustomed to weigh everything, to calculate everything, and to sell everything, or an affectionate woman, full of nobility and amiable qualities. But at the age of Schinner, the first impulse of the heart is to believe in good; and in contemplating the noble and almost disdainful brow of Adelaïde, and looking into her eyes full of soul and of thought, he inhaled, so to speak, the sweet and modest perfume of virtue.

In the middle of the conversation, he seized the opportunity of talking about portraits in general, in order to have a right to examine the frightful pastel, the colors of which had all faded, and the principal part of its surface fallen away.

"You prize this picture, no doubt, for the sake of the likeness, ladies, for the drawing is horrible," said he, looking at Adelaïde.

"It was done at Calcutta, in great haste," replied the mother in a voice of emotion.

She gazed at the shapeless sketch with the profound abstraction caused by the recollections of happiness, when they awake and fall on the heart, like a beneficent dew to whose refreshing influence we love to abandon ourselves; but there were also in the expression of the countenance of the old lady the vestiges of an eternal mourning. At least, the painter chose thus to interpret the attitude and the physiognomy of his neighbor, by whose side he came and sat down.

"Madame," said he, "in a very short time the colors of this pastel will have disappeared. The portrait will exist no longer except in your memory. Where you see a face dear to you, others will perceive nothing. Will you permit me to transfer this likeness to canvas? It will be more firmly fixed on that than it is on this paper. Allow me, as a neighbor, the pleasure of rendering you this service. There are always hours in which an artist is happy to amuse himself, after his grand compositions, by works of a less elevated character, and it will be an amusement for me to reproduce this head."

The old lady heard these words with a start of joy, and Adelaïde cast on the painter one of those concentrated glances which seem to be an emanation of the soul. Hippolyte wished to attach himself to his two neighbors by some tie, and to obtain the right of mingling with their life. His offer, addressed to the warmest affections of the heart, was the only one he could possibly make; it gratified his artist's pride, and could not offend the two ladies. Madame Leseigneur accepted it without eagerness or reluctance, but with the conscientiousness of great minds which comprehend the extent of the ties formed by such obligations, and constitute them a magnificent eulogy, a proof of esteem.

"This uniform," said the painter, "seems to be that of a naval officer?"

"Yes," said she; "it is that of a post captain. Monsieur de Rouville, my husband, died at Batavia, of a wound received in a combat with an English vessel which he encountered on the coast of Asia. He commanded a frigate of fifty-six guns, and the *Revenge* was a ship of ninety-six. The combat was very unequal, but he defended himself so courageously that he kept it up until night enabled him to escape. When I returned to France, Bonaparte was not yet in power, and they refused me a pension. When I renewed my application lately, the minister harshly told me that if the Baron de Rouville had emigrated, I should not have lost him: that he would doubtless have been a rear admiral by this time; in short, his excellency concluded by referring me to I don't know what law of forfeiture. I only took this step, to which I was urged by my friends, for the sake of my poor Adelaïde. I have always had a repugnance to hold out my hand in the name of an affliction which deprives a woman of speech and strength. I do not like this pecuniary valuation of blood irreparably spilled."

"Mamma, this subject of conversation always upsets you."

At this remark of Adelaïde's the Baroness Leseigneur de Rouville bowed her head and remained silent.

"Sir," said the young girl to Hippolyte, "I thought that a painter's work was not generally very noisy."

At this question Schinner began to blush at the remembrance of the disturbance he had made. Adelaïde did not finish, and spared him some falsehood by rising suddenly at the sound of a carriage which stopped at the door. She went into her room, and returned immediately carrying two gilt candlesticks, holding half-burned wax-candles, which she quickly lighted; and without waiting for the

ringing of the bell, she opened the door of the first room, and left the lamp there. The sound of a kiss given and received re-echoed in the heart of Hippolyte. The impatience of the young man to see the person who treated Adelaïde so familiarly was not very quickly satisfied; the new arrivals had a whispered conversation with the young girl, which appeared very long to him.

At length Mademoiselle de Rouville reappeared, followed by two men whose costume, physiognomy, and aspect were a history in themselves. The first, aged about sixty, wore one of those coats invented, I believe, for Louis XVIII., then reigning, and in which the most difficult of sumptuary problems was solved by a tailor who ought to have been immortal. This artist recognized, assuredly, the art of transition, which was the sole genius of this politically shifting age. Is it not a rare merit to be able to judge one's epoch?

This coat, which the young men of the day may take for a myth, was neither civil nor military, and might pass by turns for military or for civil. Embroidered fleurs-de-lis ornamented the flaps of the tails; the gilt buttons were likewise fleur-de-lised. On the shoulders, two empty straps demanded useless epaulets. These two military emblems looked like a petition without an address. With the old man, the button-hole of this coat, which was made of blue cloth, was adorned with several ribbons. No doubt he always held in his hand his three-cornered hat trimmed with gold cord, for the snowy locks of his powdered hair showed no trace of the pressure of a hat. He did not look more than fifty, and appeared to enjoy robust health. While proclaiming the frank and loyal character of the old emigrants, his physiognomy also denoted the easy and libertine manners, the gay passions and carelessness, of those mousquetaires formerly so celebrated in the annals of gallantry. His actions, his gait, his manners announced that he would not easily give up either his royalism, or his religion, or his amours.

A truly fantastic figure followed this imposing *voltigeur de Louis XIV.* (such was the nickname given by the Bonapartists to these noble remains of the Monarchy); but in order to paint it properly, it would have to be made the principal object of a picture in which it is only an accessory. Imagine a lean and dried-up personage, dressed like the first, but being only, so to speak, his reflection, or his shadow, if you like. The coat of the one was new; the other's was old and faded. The powder of the hair seemed less white in the second, the gold of the fleurs-de-lis less shining, the shoulder-straps more despairing and more shriveled up, the intellect weaker, the life further advanced toward the fatal term, than in the first. In short, he realized the saying of Rivarol about Champcenetz: "He is my moonlight." He was only the double of the other—a pale and poor double, for there existed between them the same difference as between the first and the last impression of a lithograph. This dumb old man was a mystery to the painter, and remained a constant mystery. The chevalier — for he was a chevalier — did not speak, and nobody spoke to him. Was he a friend, a poor relation, a man who accompanied the old gallant like an old lady's companion? Was he the medium between the dog, the parrot, and the friend? Had he saved the fortune, or only the life of his benefactor? Was he the Trim of another Captain Toby? Elsewhere, as at the Baroness de Rouville's, he always excited curiosity without ever satisfying it. Who could recollect, under the Restoration, the attachment which, before the Revolution, united this chevalier to his friend's wife, dead twenty years ago?

The personage who appeared the most modern of these two ancient men advanced gallantly toward the Baroness de Rouville, kissed her hand, and sat down beside her. The other bowed and placed himself at a distance represented by two chairs from his original. Adelaïde came and leaned her elbows on the back of the chair occupied by the old gentleman, imitating, without knowing it, the attitude given by Guérin to the

sister of Dido in his celebrated picture. Although the familiarity of the old gentleman was that of a father, his liberties appeared for the moment to displease the young girl.

"Well, are you cross with me?" said he.

Then he cast on Schinner one of those oblique glances, full of shrewdness and cunning—a diplomatic glance, whose expression betrayed the prudent anxiety, the polite curiosity of well-bred people, who seem to inquire, on seeing an unknown, "Is he one of us?"

"You see a neighbor of ours," said the old lady, pointing to Hippolyte. "This gentleman is a celebrated painter, whose name must be known to you in spite of your indifference to the arts."

The gentleman noticed the ingenuity of his old friend in the omission of the name, and bowed to the young man.

"Certainly," said he, "I have heard a great deal of his pictures at the last Exhibition. Talent has great privileges, sir," added he, looking at the artist's red ribbon. "This distinction, which we have to win at the price of our blood and long services, you obtain while you are young. But all honors are kindred," added he, putting his hand on his cross of St. Louis.

Hippolyte murmured some words of thanks, and relapsed into silence, contenting himself with admiring with increasing enthusiasm the splendid head of the young girl, by which he was charmed. He soon became absorbed in this contemplation, and thought no more of the poorness of the place. For him, the face of Adelaïde was encircled by a luminous atmosphere. He replied briefly to the questions addressed to him, which he fortunately heard, thanks to a singular faculty of the mind, whose ideas may sometimes become in a manner divided. To whom has it not happened to remain plunged in a reverie, either voluptuous or sad, and hear its voice within his breast, while listening to a conversation or a reading? Admirable dualism, which often helps us to have patience with bores! Fertile and smiling, hope spread before him a thousand thoughts of happiness, and he no longer wished to notice anything around him. A child, full of confidence, it seemed to him a shame to analyze pleasure. After a certain lapse of time, he perceived that the old lady and her daughter were playing at cards with the old gentleman. As to the latter's satellite, keeping up his character of a shadow, he stood behind his friend, absorbed in his game, replying to the mute questions addressed to him by the player by little grimaces of approval which replied to the interrogatory movements of the other physiognomy.

"Du Halga, I always lose," said the gentleman.

"You put out badly," replied the Baroness de Rouville.

"For three months I have not won a single game of you," he returned.

"Monsieur le Comte, have you the aces?" asked the old lady.

"Yes. One more scored," said he.

"Will you let me give you my advice?" said Adelaïde.

"No, no; keep in front of me. *Ventre de biche!* it would be losing too much not to have you in sight."

At last the game came to an end. The gentleman took out his purse, and throwing two louis on the table, said pettishly, "Forty francs—as good as gold. And, *diantre!* it is eleven o'clock."

"It is eleven o'clock," said the silent personage, looking at the painter.

The young man, hearing this last word rather more distinctly than the others, bethought him that it was time to retire. Re-entering the world of ordinary ideas, he took advantage of an opportunity to join in the conversation, took leave of the baroness, her daughter, and the two unknown, and went away, a prey to the first delights of true love, without seeking to analyze the little incidents of the evening.

The next day, the young painter experienced a most violent desire to see Adelaïde again. If he had listened to his passion, he would have called on his neighbors at six in the morning, when he came to his atelier. He had sense enough, however, to wait till the afternoon. But, as

soon as he thought he might present himself at Madame de Rouville's, he went down; rang the bell, not without some strong palpitations of the heart; and, blushing like a young girl, timidly asked Mademoiselle Leseigneur, who had come to open the door to him, for the portrait of the Baron de Rouville.

"Come in, please," said Adelaïde, who, no doubt, had heard him come down from his atelier.

The painter followed her, bashful and confused, not knowing what to say. So much happiness made him stupid. To see Adelaïde, to listen to the rustle of her dress, after having longed all the morning to be near her, after having got up a hundred times and said, "I will go down!" and not going down, was, for him, such a rapturous existence, that such sensations, too much prolonged, would have exhausted his senses. The heart has the singular power of putting an extraordinary price upon trifles. What joy for a traveler to pick a blade of grass, an unknown leaf, if he has risked his life in the search for them! It is the same with the trifles of love.

The old lady was not in the room. When the young girl found herself alone with the painter, she brought a chair to get down the portrait; but, on perceiving that she could not unhook it without putting her foot on the chiffonier, she turned to Hippolyte, and said with a blush—

"I am not tall enough—will you get it?"

A sentiment of modesty, proved by the expression of her countenance and the accent of her voice, was the true motive of her request; and the young man, so understanding it, gave her one of those intelligent looks which are the softest language of love. Seeing that the painter had understood her, Adelaïde cast down her eyes with a movement of pride, the secret of which belongs to maidens. Not finding a word to say, and almost abashed, the painter took the picture, examined it gravely by the light of the window, and went away, without saying any more to Mademoiselle Leseigneur than—

"I will soon bring it you back again."

During this rapid instant, they both of them experienced one of those strong agitations whose effects upon the mind may be compared to those caused by a stone thrown into a lake. The sweetest reflections arise and succeed each other, indefinite, multiplied, and aimless, agitating the heart like the retreating circles which for a long while ruffle the water, starting from the spot where the stone was thrown in.

Hippolyte returned to his atelier armed with the portrait. Already his easel was provided with a canvas, a palette was charged with colors; the brushes were cleaned, and the place and the light chosen; and until dinner time he worked at the portrait with the ardor which artists infuse into their caprices. He returned the same evening to the Baroness de Rouville's, and stayed from nine till eleven.

Except the different subjects of conversation, this evening exactly resembled the previous one. The two old men arrived at the same time, the same game at piquet took place, the same phrases were spoken by the players, the sum lost by Adelaïde's friend was as large as that lost the evening before; only Hippolyte, grown a little bolder, ventured to talk to the young girl.

Thus passed a week, during which the sentiments of the painter and of Adelaïde went through those delicious and gradual transformations which lead the mind to a perfect understanding. Thus, day by day, the look with which Adelaïde welcomed her friend became more friendly, more confiding, more gay, more frank; her voice, her manners, grew more significant and more familiar. They both laughed and chatted, communicated their thoughts to each other, and talked about themselves with the simplicity of two children who, in the space of one day, have become as good friends as if they had known each other for three years. Schinner tried to learn piquet. Ignorant, and a perfect novice, he naturally made blunder on blunder; and, like the old man, he lost nearly every game. With-

out having yet confided to each other their love, the two lovers knew that they belonged to each other. Hippolyte took pleasure in exercising his power over his timid love. Many concessions were made to him by the timid and devoted Adelaïde, who was the dupe of those sham estrangements which the least skillful lover or the most simple young girl can invent, and of which they avail themselves continually, as spoiled children abuse their power over their mother's love.

Thus, all familiarities soon ceased between the old count and Adelaïde. The young girl understood the displeasure of the painter, and the ideas hidden in the lines of his forehead, in the brusk accent of the few words he uttered, when the old man kissed without ceremony the hands or the cheek of Adelaïde. On her side, Mademoiselle Leseigneur soon required from her lover a rigid account of his slightest actions. She was so unhappy, so uneasy when Hippolyte did not come, she knew so well how to scold him for his absences, that the painter had to give up visiting his friends, and went no more into society. Adelaïde allowed a woman's natural jealousy to show itself on learning that sometimes, after leaving Madame de Rouville's at eleven o'clock, the painter made some more visits, and appeared in the most brilliant *salons* of Paris. That kind of life, she told him, was bad for his health; and then, with that profound conviction to which the accent, the actions, and the looks of a loving girl give so much power, she insisted that a man obliged to bestow on several women at once his time and the charms of his mind, could not be the subject of a very strong affection. The painter was thus led on, as much by the despotism of passion as by the exactions of a loving young girl, to live only in this little household, where everything pleased him. In short, never was love more pure or more ardent. An equal faith and an equal delicacy on each side kept this passion growing, without the help of those sacrifices by which many people seek to prove their love. There existed between them a continual exchange of sensations so sweet, that they never knew which gave and which received the most. An involuntary inclination kept their hearts always closely united.

The progress of this genuine sentiment was so rapid that, two months after the accident to which the painter was indebted for the happiness of knowing Adelaïde, their life had become one and the same life. In the morning, when the young girl heard footsteps above her, she could say to herself, "He is there." When Hippolyte returned to his mother's at dinner time, he never missed coming to greet his neighbors; and in the evening he arrived at the usual hour, with the punctuality of a lover. Thus, the most tyrannical and most exacting of women in her love could not have made the slightest reproach to the young painter; and Adelaïde tasted a boundless and unalloyed happiness in seeing the ideal of which it is so natural to dream at her age realized to its fullest extent. The old gentleman came less frequently, the jealous Hippolyte having replaced him of an evening at the card-table, and in his constant ill-luck with the cards. Still, in the midst of his happiness, while thinking of the disastrous situation of Madame de Rouville—for he had acquired more than one proof of her distress—he was seized by an annoying idea. Already he had said to himself several times, on returning home, "What! twenty francs every evening?" And he dared not avow to himself his odious suspicions.

He took two months to paint the portrait, and when it was finished, varnished, and framed, he looked upon it as one of his best works. The Baroness de Rouville had not said a word more to him about it. Was it forgetfulness or pride? The painter did not wish to explain to himself the reason of this silence. He plotted joyously with Adelaïde to put the portrait in its place during the absence of Madame de Rouville.

So one day, during the walk which her mother generally took in the Tuileries, Adelaïde went upstairs alone, for the first time, to the painter's studio, under the

pretext of seeing the portrait in the favorable light in which it had been painted. She remained mute and motionless, given up to a delicious contemplation in which all a woman's sentiments are merged in one. Are they not all summed up in a boundless admiration for the beloved one? When the painter, uneasy at this silence, bent forward to look at the young girl, she gave him her hand, without being able to say a word, but two tears fell from her eyes. Hippolyte took the hand, covered it with kisses, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence, both of them wishing to avow their love, but not daring. The painter kept the hand of Adelaïde in his, and then a mutual warmth and a mutual emotion showed them that both their hearts beat equally strongly. Too deeply agitated, the young girl withdrew herself gently from Hippolyte, and said, with a look full of *naïveté*.

"You will make my mother very happy."

"What! your mother only?" asked he.

"Oh, me? I am too happy already."

The painter bent his head and kept silence, alarmed at the violence of the sentiments which the accent of this speech awoke in his heart. Then, understanding, both of them, the danger of this situation, they went down and put the portrait in its place.

Hippolyte dined for the first time with the baroness, who, in her emotion, and all in tears, wanted to embrace him. In the evening the old emigrant, an old comrade of the Baron de Rouville, paid a visit to his two friends, to inform them that he had been made a vice-admiral. His terrestrial navigations across Germany and Russia had been allowed to reckon as naval campaigns. At the sight of the portrait, he shook the painter cordially by the hand, and exclaimed—

"On my honor, although my old carcase is not worth preserving, I would gladly give five hundred pistoles to see myself as well done as my old friend Rouville."

At this proposition the baroness gave her friend a look, and smiled, while allowing the signs of a sudden gratitude to appear on her countenance. Hippolyte thought he could discern that the old admiral wished to offer him the price of the two portraits in paying for his own. His artist's pride, as much as his jealousy, perhaps, took offense at this idea, and he replied—

"If I painted portraits, sir, I should not have taken this one."

The admiral bit his lips, and sat down to his game.

The painter remained by Adelaïde, who proposed a rubber at piquet, and he accepted. While playing himself, he remarked in Madame de Rouville an ardor for play which surprised him. Never before had this old baroness manifested so ardent a desire to win, nor so lively a pleasure is fingering the gold pieces of the gentleman. During the evening, evil suspicions arose to disturb the happiness of Hippolyte and inspire him with distrust. Did Madame de Rouville live by play, then? Was she not playing, at this moment, to pay off some old debt, or urged by some necessity? Perhaps she had not paid her rent. This old man appeared quite knowing enough not to allow his money to be filched with impunity. What interest attracted this rich man to this poor house? These involuntary reflections incited him to watch the old man and the baroness, whose airs of intelligence and certain oblique looks cast on Adelaïde and himself displeased him. "Are they deceiving me?" was for Hippolyte a last idea, horrible and degrading, and in which he believed exactly enough to be tortured by it. He wished to stay until after the departure of the two old men, to confirm his suspicions or to dissipate them. He took out his purse to pay Adelaïde, but, carried away by his bitter thoughts, he put it on the table and fell into a reverie, which did not last long. Then, ashamed of his silence, he rose, replied to a trifling question of Madame de Rouville, and came to her side in order to be able, while chatting, to observe more closely this old countenance. He went away a prey to a thousand uncertainties. After having gone down a few stairs, he came back to get his forgotten purse.

"I left my purse with you," said he to the young girl.

"No," she answered, blushing.

"I thought it was there," replied he, pointing to the card-table.

Ashamed, for Adelaïde's sake and the baroness's, not to see it there, he looked at them with a stupefied air which made them laugh, turned pale, and continued, feeling his waistcoat, "I was mistaken; I dare say I have got it."

In one end of this purse there were fifteen louis, and in the other some small change. The theft was so flagrant, and so impudently denied, that Hippolyte had no more doubt as to the morality of his neighbors. He stopped on the stairs, and got down them with difficulty; his legs trembled, he turned giddy, he perspired, he shivered, and found himself quite unable to walk, struggling with the frightful commotion caused by the overthrow of all his hopes. From this moment he recalled to his memory a crowd of observations, slight in appearance, but which corroborated his hideous suspicions, and which, by proving the reality of this last act, opened his eyes to the character and the life of these two women. Had they waited, then, until the portrait was given to steal the purse? If planned, the robbery seemed far more odious. The painter remembered, for his misfortune, that, for two or three evenings, Adelaïde, while appearing to examine with a young girl's curiosity the peculiar make of the worn-out silk netting, had probably ascertained the money contained in the purse while making remarks, innocent in appearance, but, no doubt, with the object of watching for the moment when the sum would be large enough to be abstracted.

"The old admiral has excellent reasons, perhaps, for not marrying Adelaïde; and then the baroness has tried to—" At this supposition he stopped short, and did not even finish his thought, which was demolished by a very just reflection. "If the baroness," he thought, "hoped to marry her daughter to me, they would not have robbed me." Then he tried, so as not to have to renounce his illusions and his love, already so deeply rooted, to find some justification in chance. "My purse must have fallen on the ground," he said to himself; "it has caught on my chair. Perhaps I have got it; I am so forgetful." He felt himself all over, with rapid movements, but did not find the accursed purse. His cruel memory recalled momentarily the fatal truth. He saw distinctly his purse spread on the table; but, doubting the theft no longer, he still made excuses for Adelaïde, saying to himself that we ought not to judge the unfortunate so quickly. No doubt, there was a secret in this action apparently so degrading. He would not admit that this proud and noble countenance was a lie. Nevertheless, this miserable dwelling appeared to him denuded of the poesies of love, which embellishes everything. He saw it soiled and stained, and considered it the representative of an inner life, ignoble, unoccupied, and vicious. Are not our sentiments, so to say, written on the things which surround us?

The next morning, he got up without having slept. The heartache, that serious moral malady, had made enormous progress in him. To lose a dreamed-of happiness, to renounce an entire future, is a pang much more acute than that caused by the ruin of a felicity already experienced, however complete it may have been. Is not hope always better than remembrance? The meditations into which the soul suddenly falls are then like a sea without a shore, on the bosom of which we may float for a moment, but in which our love must drown and perish. And it is a fearful death. Are not our sentiments the most brilliant part of our life? From this partial death proceed, in certain delicate or powerful organizations, the awful ravages produced by hopes and passions betrayed. Thus it was with the young painter. He went out early in the morning to walk in the cool shades of the Tuileries, absorbed in his thoughts, forgetting everything in the world. There, by chance, he met one of his most intimate friends, an old companion at school and in the studio, with whom he had agreed better than with a brother.

"Well, Hippolyte, what is the matter with you?" said François Suchet, a young sculptor, who had just obtained the grand prize, and was soon to start for Italy.

"I am very unhappy," replied Hippolyte, gravely.

"It is only a love affair that could upset you. Money, glory, consideration—nothing else fails you."

Insensibly, confidences began, and the painter avowed his love. The moment he mentioned the Rue de Suresnes, and a young girl who lived on the fourth floor—

"Halt there!" cried Suchet, gayly. "It is a little girl I come to the Assumption every morning to see, and to whom I am making love. Why, my dear fellow, we all know her. Her mother is a baroness. Do you believe in baronesses lodging on the fourth floor? B-r-r-r! Ah, well, you are a man of the golden age. We see the old mother here, in the avenue, every day. Why, she has got a face and a style that tells everything. What! you have not guessed what she is from the way she holds her bag?"

The two friends walked about for a long time, and several young men who knew Suchet or Schinner joined them. The adventure of the painter, considered of very little importance, was related to them by the sculptor.

"And he, too," said he, "has seen this little girl!"

There were observations, laughter, and jokes, innocent and stamped with the gayety familiar to artists, but which made Hippolyte suffer horribly. A certain bashfulness of disposition made him ill at ease on seeing the secret of his heart treated so lightly, his passion torn into tatters; an unknown young girl, whose life appeared so modest, subject to judgments, true or false, given with so much carelessness. He feigned to be moved by a spirit of contradiction; he demanded seriously from each the proofs of his assertions, and the joking recommenced.

"But, my dear fellow, have you seen the baroness's shawl?" said Suchet.

"Have you followed the little one when she trots to the Assumption of a morning?" said Joseph Bridau, a young color-grinder from the atelier of Gros.

"Ah! the mother possesses, among other virtues, a certain gray dress which I look upon as a type," said Bixiou, the maker of caricatures.

"Listen, Hippolyte," resumed the sculptor. "Come here about four o'clock, and just analyze the walk of the mother and daughter. If you have any doubts after that, well, they will never make anything of you, and you will be capable of marrying the daughter of your porteress."

A prey to the most conflicting sentiments, the painter quitted his friends. Adelaïde and her mother, it seemed to him, ought to be above these accusations, and he felt remorse from the bottom of his heart, for having suspected the purity of this young girl, so beautiful and so simple. He came to his studio, passed by the door of the apartments which contained his Adelaïde, and felt a pang at the heart, in which no man is mistaken. He loved Mademoiselle de Rouville so passionately that, in spite of the robbery of the purse, he adored her still. His love was like that of the Chevalier des Grieux admiring and purifying his mistress even in the cart which takes abandoned women to prison. "Why should not my love render her the purest of all women? Why abandon her to evil and vice, without holding out to her a friendly hand?" This mission pleased him. Love turns everything to its own advantage. Nothing tempts a young man more than to play the part of good genius to a woman. There is a certain something romantic in the enterprise which suits excitable dispositions. Is it not the most comprehensive devotion in the most graceful and elevated form? Is there not a grandeur in knowing that we love enough to love still when the love of others fades out and dies?

Hippolyte sat down in his studio, looked at his picture without doing anything to it, only seeing the figures through the tears that hung in his eyes, always holding his brush in his hand, advancing toward the canvas as if to soften a tint, and

not touching it. Night surprised him in this attitude. Roused from his reverie by the darkness, he went down, met the old admiral on the staircase, gave him a somber look in bowing to him, and rushed away. He had intended to call on his neighbors, but the sight of the protector of Adelaïde froze his heart and put his resolution to flight. He asked himself, for the hundredth time, what interest could attract this old man of loose manners, with eighty thousand livres a year, to this fourth story, where he lost about forty francs every evening. This interest he thought he could guess. The next and the following days, Hippolyte threw himself into hard work, to try and combat his passion by the rush of ideas and the heat of conception. He succeeded by half. Study consoled him, but without having the power to smother the memory of so many delightful hours spent with Adelaïde.

One evening, on leaving his studio, he found the door of the apartments of the two ladies ajar. Some one was standing in the embrasure of the window. The position of the door and the staircase did not allow of his passing without seeing Adelaïde. He bowed coldly, giving her a look full of indifference; but, judging the young girl's sufferings by his own, he shuddered internally on thinking of the bitterness this look and this coldness must cast into a loving heart. To crown the sweetest hours that had ever rejoiced two pure souls by a week of disdain, and by the most profound and entire contempt! Frightful conclusion. Perhaps the purse had been found, and perhaps every evening Adelaïde had expected her friend. This idea, so simple and natural, caused fresh remorse to the lover; he asked himself whether the proofs of attachment the young girl had given him, whether the rapturous conversations impregnated with a love which had charmed him, did not deserve at least an inquiry—were not worth a justification. Ashamed of having resisted for a week the wishes of his heart, and feeling almost guilty on account of this combat, he called the same evening on Madame de Rouville. All his suspicions, all his evil thoughts, vanishe at the sight of the young girl, pale anc fallen away.

"Ah, good Heaven! what is the matter with you?" he said to her, after having saluted the baroness.

Adelaïde answered nothing, but she gave him a look full of melancholy—a sad, dejected look, which gave him pain.

"You have, no doubt, been working hard," said the old lady. "You are altered. We are the cause of your seclusion. That portrait has delayed some pictures of importance to your reputation."

Hippolyte was happy to find so good an excuse for his impoliteness.

"Yes," said he, "I have been very busy, but I have been ill."

At these words, Adelaïde raised her head and looked at her lover; her anxious eyes reproached him no more.

"And you supposed that we were quite indifferent to any good or bad fortune that might happen to you?" said the old lady.

"I was wrong," replied he. "Yet there are troubles which cannot be confided to any one, not even to a friendship less recent than that with which you honor me."

"The sincerity and the strength of friendship cannot be measured by time. I have seen old friends not shed a tear for each other in misfortune," said the baroness, shaking her head.

"But what is the matter with you?" inquired the young man of Adelaïde.

"Oh, nothing," replied the baroness. "Adelaïde has been spending some nights in finishing a piece of lady's work, and would not believe me when I told her that a day more or less was of little consequence."

Hippolyte was not listening. On seeing these two faces, so noble and so pure, he blushed for his suspicions, and attributed the loss of his purse to some unknown accident. This evening was delicious for him, and perhaps also for her. There are some secrets that young hearts comprehend so well! Adelaïde guessed the thoughts of Hippolyte. Without wish-

ing to avow his faults, the painter acknowledged them; he returned to his mistress more loving and more affectionate, endeavoring thus to purchase a tacit pardon. Adelaïde tasted a joy so perfect and so sweet, that it did not seem too dearly bought by all the torture which had so cruelly torn her heart. The veritable harmony of their souls, that understanding full of magic, was nevertheless disturbed by a word from the Baroness de Rouville. "Shall we have our little game?" said she; "for my old Kergarouët sulks with me."

This phrase aroused all the fears of the young painter, who blushed on looking at the mother of Adelaïde; but he only saw on her face the expression of an unaffected good nature. No evil design destroyed its charm; there was no treachery in its slyness; its sharpness seemed kindly, and no remorse disturbed its calm. He sat down to the card-table. Adelaïde wished to share in the painter's stakes, pretending that he did not know piquet and wanted a partner. Madame de Rouville and her daughter made signs to each other during the game, which made Hippolyte all the more uneasy because he was winning; but, in the end, the last hand rendered the two lovers the debtors of the baroness. Having to get some change out of his pocket, the painter took his hands off the table, and then he saw before him a purse, which Adelaide had slipped there without his notice. The poor girl was holding the old one, and, to keep herself in countenance, was looking in it for the money to pay her mother. All Hippolyte's blood rushed so suddenly to his heart that he nearly lost consciousness. The new purse substituted for his, and which contained his fifteen louis, was worked in gold beads. The slides, the tassels, everything attested the good taste of Adelaïde, who, without doubt, had spent her winnings on the ornaments of this charming piece of work.

It was impossible to say with more delicacy that the gift of the painter could only be recompensed by a proof of affection. When Hippolyte, overwhelmed with happiness, turned his eyes on Adelaïde and the baroness, he saw them trembling with pleasure and rejoicing in this amiable piece of trickery. He felt himself little, mean, and foolish; he would have liked to be able to punish himself, to tear his breast. Tears came into his eyes; he got up, and, by an irresistible impulse, took Adelaïde in his arms, pressed her to his heart, snatched a kiss, and then, with the bluntness of an artist, "I ask her of you for my wife," he cried, looking at the baroness.

Adelaïde turned on the painter eyes half angry, and Madame de Rouville was trying to find an answer, when this scene was interrupted by the sound of the bell.

The old vice-admiral appeared, followed by his shadow and Madame Schinner. After having divined the cause of the grief which her son vainly endeavored to hide from her, the mother of Hippolyte had made inquiries of some of her friends about Adelaïde. Justly alarmed at the calumnies which hung over the young girl unknown to the Count de Kergarouët, whose name was told her by the *portière*, she went to tell them to the vice-admiral, who, in his rage, would have liked, he said, to cut off the scoundrel's ears. Animated by his indignation, the admiral confided to Madame Schinner the secret of his voluntary losses at cards—that the pride of the baroness left him only this ingenious means of assisting her.

When Madame Schinner had saluted Madame de Rouville, the latter looked at the Count de Kergarouët, the Chevalier du Halga (the old lover of the Countess de Kergarouët), Hippolyte, and Adelaïde, and said, with the grace that comes from the heart, "It seems we are a family party to-night."

II.

COUSIN PONS.

I.

A GLORIOUS RELIC OF THE EMPIRE.

About three o'clock in the afternoon of a day in October, 1844, a man, whose age was about sixty (though every one would have taken him to be older), might have been seen wending his way along the Boulevard des Italiens. His nose was in the air and his lips were pursed up, like those of a merchant who has just struck a good bargain, or of a young man leaving his sweetheart in high good-humor with himself. Now, at Paris, this elevation of the nose and pursing of the lips are the strongest indications of self-satisfaction that a man can possibly exhibit.

So soon as those persons, who, seated on chairs, line the Boulevard des Italiens, day after day, and resign themselves to the charm of analyzing the passers-by, had caught sight of the old man in the distance, that peculiar smile, which characterizes the denizen of Paris, began to steal over their faces. 'Tis a smile that teems with irony, ridicule, or sympathy, according to circumstances; but only rare and living curiosities can summon it to the features of the Parisian, whose eyes are feasted, even to satiety, with every species of spectacle.

A certain smart retort will explain the value, from an archæological point of view, of this old fellow, and the cause of the smile which. on his appearance, flashed, echo-like, from face to face. Hyacinthe, an actor celebrated for his sallies, being asked, on a certain occasion, where he had those hats made, the mere sight of which was wont to set the playhouse in a roar, replied, "I do not get them made; I *keep* them." Even so, among the million actors of whom the Grand Parisian Company consists, there is full many an unconscious Hyacinthe who, retaining in his attire all the absurdities of some particular period, bursts upon your astonished gaze, the complete personification of an epoch, as, chewing the cud of bitter grief over the treachery of some quondam friend, you are sauntering along, and extorts from you a burst of merriment.

By preserving, in certain details of his apparel, a quixotic fidelity to the fashions of the year 1806, the pedestrian in question recalled, without being a positive caricature of, the imperial era; and herein lies a distinction the subtilty of which lends, in the eye of a close observer, a peculiar value to apparitions of this kind. But the combination of minute details, to which we are now referring, would fail to arrest the attention of persons not endowed with the analytic power that distinguishes the connoisseur in *flânerie;* and, to evoke laughter while he was still at a distance, our pedestrian must have presented some such glaring extravagance of garb as actors aim at in order to secure a round of applause when first they step on to the stage. And such a glaring extravagance this pedestrian did indeed exhibit. Over a greenish coat, garnished with buttons of white metal, this lean and gaunt old man wore a hazel-colored spencer! A man with a spencer in 1844! Why, 'tis much the same thing as if Napoleon Bonaparte had deigned to revisit the glimpses of the sun for a couple of hours!

The spencer, as its name imports, was invented by a certain lord who was, doubtless, vain of his good figure. Be-

fore the peace of Amiens, the Englishman in question had solved the problem how to cover the upper part of the body without overwhelming it beneath the weight of that hideous box-coat which is now wearing out the remnant of its days on the backs of the old hackney-coachmen of Paris. But since fine figures are the exception, not the rule, the spencer, as a fashion for the male sex, had, in spite of its English origin, but a transient triumph in France.

At sight of this spencer, the men of from forty to fifty indulged their fancies by dressing its wearer in imaginary top-boots and imaginary breeches of green kerseymere, tied with an imaginary bunch of ribbons, and thus once more beheld themselves in the costume of their youth; the old ladies called to mind their former conquests; while, as for the young men, they simply asked themselves why this aged Alcibiades had cut away the tail of his overcoat. So thoroughly was the whole aspect of the old man in keeping with the spencer that you would at once have pronounced him to be an Empire-man, just as we are in the habit of talking about Empire-furniture. But he was a symbol of the Empire to those only, who, having known that magnificent and imposing epoch, at least *de visu*, possessed the indispensable qualification of a somewhat accurate recollection of its fashions. The interval of time that separates us from the Empire is already so wide that it is not given to every one to recall it, in all its Gallo-Greek reality.

In the indulgence of that species of bravado adopted by the bureaucracy and civilians in general under the Empire, by way of retort to the bravado of military men, this old fellow carried his hat upon the back of his head, so as to expose almost the whole of his forehead. The hat, moreover, was a shocking twelve-and-sixpenny silk hat, whose nether brim two large long ears had stained with whitish splotches that defied the brush, while the silken covering of the hat, having been, as usual, unskillfully applied to the pasteboard shape, was puckered here and there, and seemed, in spite of the careful hand that groomed it morning after morning, to be suffering from an attack of leprosy.

Beneath this hat, thus precariously worn, stretched a sheepish comical face, such as you may see upon the shoulders of a Chinese squab, and nowhere else. This vast visage, which was as full of pits as a skimming-ladle is full of holes—of pits so deep that they actually cast shadows—resembled a Roman mask dug out of the earth, and violated every rule of anatomy. Scan the features as you might, your eye discovered not a trace of framework in them. Bones the face seemingly had none, but where they should have been, your eye encountered flat gelatinous curves of flesh, and wandered thence, to find flaccid spherical knobs usurping the place of what, in any ordinary physiognomy, would have been a hollow; while, like some erratic bowlder that commands a plain, a huge Don Quixote nose—the kind of nose which (as Cervantes must have noticed) indicates a congenital devotion to noble aims, that is apt to degenerate into gullibility—stood boldly out, the most prominent feature in this grotesque countenance, through which, as through a large flat toad-stool, peered a pair of sad gray eyes, surmounted by two red lines that did duty for eyebrows. The ugliness of this old man, however (all comic as it was), did not excite derision; the extreme melancholy that welled over from the poor fellow's faded eyes appealed directly to the scoffer's heart, and froze the joke upon his lips. The thought would at once suggest itself, that Nature had peremptorily forbidden this poor creature, under pain of exciting a woman's laughter or disgust, to breathe a single syllable of love. In the presence of such a misfortune a Frenchman is dumb; for, to a Frenchman, the most cruel of all misfortunes is—to lack the power to win a woman's favor!

The dress of this man, thus branded by the hand of Nature, was that of all poor gentlemen—a class which the wealthy often strive to ape. Over his shoes he wore a pair of gaiters, which were fashioned like those of the Imperial Guard, and doubtlessly helped him to keep down

his washing-bill. There were reddish tints about his black cloth trousers, each white and shiny fold of which said, as plainly as their cut, that three years had clapsed since they were bought. Ample as they were, they failed to conceal a certain leanness, which (to judge from the old fellow's sensual mouth, whose full thick lips disclosed, at every smile, two rows of pearl-white teeth that would have done no discredit to a shark) was the result of a constitutional tendency rather than of a Pythagorean diet. Beneath his double-breasted waistcoat of black cloth he wore a second waistcoat, which was white, and beneath this, again, in the third rank, blazed the red margin of a knitted vest; so that one was irresistibly reminded of Garat's five waistcoats. An enormous white muslin cravat, whose pretentious bow had been devised by some dandy to charm "the charming women" of the year 1809, rose so high above the old man's chin that his face seemed, as it were, ingulfed in the folds of the cravat. A chain of plaited silk, to imitate hair, spanned the old man's shirt-front, and protected his watch from a robbery that no one was likely to attempt. His greenish coat, though irreproachably tidy, was some three years senior to the trousers; but its black velvet collar and white metal buttons had been recently renewed, and thus told a tale of minute domestic carefulness.

This trick of fixing the hat upon the occiput, the triple waistcoat, the immense cravat in which the chin lay buried, the gaiters, the metal buttons on the greenish coat—all these insignia of the fashions of the Empire harmonized with the exploded perfumes of *Incroyable* foppery, with an indefinable tenuity in the folds of the old man's garments, and a certain all-pervading primness and precision that recalled tho school of David and the fragile furniture of Jacob. Nor did it require a second glance to discover that the person thus attired was either a gentleman governed by some secret vice, or one of those men with small fixed incomes, whose expenditure is restrained by the scantiness of their resources within limits so narrow and so nicely adjusted that a broken pane, a torn coat, or that philanthropic pestilence—a collection for the poor—will leave them without pocket-money for a whole month.

Had you been upon the spot, you would assuredly have asked yourself how it came to pass that a smile was lighting up this uncouth countenance, whose habitual cast, like that of all who are involved in an obscure struggle for the common necessaries of life, would naturally be cold and sad. But had you noticed the paternal care bestowed by this singular old man upon the evidently valuable object which he was holding in his right hand, beneath the two left skirts of his double coat, in order to guard the treasure from casual blows; and, more especially, had you observed that his face wore the busy look assumed by the idler, when engaged in the execution of a commission, you would have surmised that the old man must have recovered some article as precious as the lap-dog of a marchioness; and that, with all the bustling gallantry of an Empire-man, he was conveying it in triumph to the "charming woman" of sixty, who has not yet learned to dispense with the daily visit of her admirer. Paris is the only city in the world in which you can encounter such scenes — scenes which convert its boulevards into a perpetual drama, acted by the French people, gratis, for the benefit of Art.

II.

THE END OF A WINNER OF THE GRAND PRIX DE ROME.

JUDGING from the build of this raw-boned person, you would have experienced some difficulty, the audacious spencer notwithstanding, in classing him among the artists of Paris—a body of men who closely resemble the Parisian street Arab, in so far as they possess the privilege of working the imaginations of sober-sided citizens into ecstasies of what, since the old drolatic word *mirobolant* has been restored to its ancient honors, may be

termed most *mirobolant* mirth. Yet an artist our pedestrian undoubtedly was, and a grand-prize man to boot; the composer of the cantata which, first after the re-establishment of the Académie de Rome, carried off the laurel at the Institute—in short, this pedestrian was no less a man than M. Sylvain Pons! the composer of certain celebrated romances which our mothers used to warble, of two or three operas which were put upon the stage in 1815 and 1816, and of sundry unpublished scores besides. Now, in the latter autumn of his life, this worthy man was conductor of the orchestra of a boulevard theater. Thanks to his ugliness, he also held the post of music-master in several boarding-schools for young ladies. His salary and fees for out-door lessons were his only sources of revenue. An out-door tutor at his time of life! What a world of mysteries in that prosaic position!

Thus, then, this last of the spencer-wearers bore, upon his outer man, something beyond the mere symbols of the imperial epoch. There was a grand lesson to be learned from the three waistcoats which he wore. He exhibited himself, gratis, as one of the numerous victims of the sinister and fatal system called competition, which, after a barren probation of one hundred years, still reigns supreme in France. This Intelligence-Press was invented by Poisson de Marigny, Madame de Pompadour's brother, who, in or about the year 1746, was appointed director of the Fine Arts.

Now just cast up—you may do it on your fingers—the names of the men of genius furnished to us from the ranks of the laureates during the past century. In the first place, let governments and academies do what they will, it is impossible that their combinations should do the work of those miracles of chance to which great men owe their origin. That origin is, of all the mysteries of generation, the most inscrutable to the all-searching analysis which we, in these modern times, have set on foot. Again, the Egyptians are said to have invented ovens for hatching chickens; now what would you think of these Egyptians if they had omitted to provide these chickens with appropriate food so soon as they were hatched? Yet it is precisely thus that France is acting. She first endeavors to produce artists by means of the hot-house of competition; and then, the sculptor, painter, engraver, or composer once manufactured by this purely mechanical process, she recks as little of him as the evening dandy recks of the flowers with which he decked his button-hole in the morning.

It turns out, after all, that the real men of talent are Greuze or Watteau, Felicien David or Pagnest, Gericault or Decamps, Auber or David d'Angers, Eugene Delacroix or Meissonier—men who trouble themselves little about grand prizes, men who are reared in the open air under the rays of that invisible sun which is called—Vocation.

From Rome (whither he was sent to be manufactured into a great musician) Sylvain Pons brought back a taste for antiquities and beautiful works of art. He had a wonderful amount of knowledge concerning all those objects (masterpieces of the hand and of the fancy) which have recently acquired, in popular parlance, the collective appellation of bric-à-brac.

Thus then it came to pass that, in the year 1810, this son of Euterpe returned to Paris, an enthusiastic collector, laden with pictures and picture-frames, statuettes, sculptures in ivory and wood, enamels, china, etc. These various acquisitions, together with the cost of their carriage, had absorbed the major part of Pons's patrimony. The fortune which he had inherited from his mother he had spent in a similar manner, during the tour which he made in Italy, after the expiration of his three years' official residence in Rome. He wished to pay a leisurely visit to Venice, Milan, Florence, Bologna, and Naples, sojourning in each of those cities as a dreamer and philosopher, with all the heedlessness of an artist who looks to his talent for a livelihood, just as a courtesan counts upon her beauty.

During this glorious journey Pons was as happy as a man can be, who, while full

of feeling and of delicacy, is debarred, by his excessive plainness, from "success with women" (to use the phrase current in the year of grace 1809), and who finds the realities of life altogether inferior to his ideal.

But Pons had settled in his own mind how to deal with the discord that existed between the pitch of his heart and that of the external world. It was, doubtlessly, in this correct appreciation of the beautiful, lying pure and fresh in the very depths of his heart, that those ingenious, subtle, and graceful melodies, which earned for him the reputation that he enjoyed from 1810 to 1814, had their source. When any one becomes famous in France, through a certain vogue, from the fashion of the hour, from the ephemeral follies of the metropolis, lo! up springs a crop of Ponses. No country under the sun is so severe toward all that is truly great; so contemptuously indulgent toward all that is really little. It is possible that Pons, though quickly overtaken by floods of German harmony and the florid fertility of the Rossinian school, may, even so late as the year 1824, have been recognized as an agreeable composer, and known to fame as the author of a few romances (his last productions of the kind); but judge what must have been his position in 1831! As for his position in 1844—the year that ushered in the one single stirring incident of his obscure existence—he was then reduced to the value of an antediluvian quaver. In that year, although he still composed, for a trifling remuneration, divers pieces for his own theater and two or three neighboring theaters, his very existence was utterly unknown to the music-sellers.

But in spite of this neglect the worthy man did ample justice to contemporary masters of his art. The able execution of some choice *morceaux* would bring tears to his eyes. Yet his religious enthusiasm did not, as in the case of Hoffmann's Kreislers, reach the verge of insanity; Pons veiled his raptures; his enjoyment, like that of the Hashish-eater and the Theriaki, was purely internal. Now the genius of admiration, of comprehension—the only faculty that renders an ordinary man the brother of a great creator—is so rare in Paris (where idea succeeds idea as traveler succeeds traveler at an inn) that Pons has a claim upon our respectful esteem. The worthy fellow's failure may appear unnatural; but he himself candidly admitted his weakness as a harmonist; he had neglected the study of counterpoint; and thus, when, by dint of renewed application, he might have maintained his rank among modern composers, and become — not a Rossini indeed, but—a Herold, the orchestration of these more modern times, with its measureless development, seemed to Pons to be beyond his reach. Indeed, he found, in the pleasures of a collector of curiosities, so vast a set-off against his bankruptcy of glory, that, had he been compelled to choose between the possession of his curiosities and the fame of Rossini, he would have preferred—will it be believed?—his darling cabinet! In forming his collection, the old composer put into practice the axiom of Chenavard, that learned collector of choice engravings, who maintained that one can derive no pleasure from gazing at a Ruysdael, a Hobbema, a Holbein, a Raphael, a Murillo, a Greuze, a Sebastian del Piombo, a Giorgione or an Albert Durer, if the cost of its purchase exceeded fifty francs. Pons did not recognize the possibility of giving more than a hundred francs for any object whatever; and to induce him to give even fifty francs for one, it must have been worth at least three thousand. The most beautiful thing in the world, if its price amounted to three hundred francs, had no existence for Pons. Passing rare, indeed, had been his opportunities; but the three essentials to success were his. He had the legs of a stag, the leisure of the *flâneur*, and the patience of the Jew!

This system, pursued during a period of forty years, not at Paris only, but also at Rome, had borne fruit. By spending about two thousand francs on bric-à-brac in each year since his return from Rome, Pons had amassed a complete collection of masterpieces, the catalogue of which

reached the fabulous figure 1,907. Between 1811 and 1816, in the course of his wanderings through Paris, he had picked up, for ten francs apiece, various objects, each of which would, nowadays, be worth from a thousand to twelve hundred francs. His collection consisted partly of pictures culled from among the forty-five thousand which are annually put up for sale in the auction rooms of Paris; partly of soft Sèvres porcelain purchased from the hardy children of Auvergne—those satellites of the Bande-Noire who brought the marvels of Pompadour-France to Paris in wagons. In short, Pons had collected the relics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; doing full justice to the talent and genius of the French school, to the Lepautres, the Lavallee-Poussins, etc.—those Great-Unknowns, who created the style Louis-Quinze and the style Louis-Seize, and whose works form the basis of the so-called inventions of the artists of to-day, who are to be seen stooping perpetually over the treasures of the Cabinet des Estampes, with a view to the production of original works, which are simply — clever imitations!

For many of his knick-knacks Pons was indebted to those exchanges which are a source of unspeakable delight to the collector; for the pleasure of *buying* curiosities is, after all, merely a secondary pleasure; the prime, the principal, pleasure is, to barter them. Pons, it was, who first set the example of collecting snuff-boxes and miniatures; but, unknown to fame as a bric-à-brac-ologist (for he neither attended sales nor frequented the shops of the well-known dealers), he was entirely ignorant of the marketable value of his treasures.

The late Dusommerard had done his utmost to strike up an intimacy with the old composer; but the prince of bric-à-brac died without having succeeded in gaining access to the Pons Museum—the only museum that will bear comparison with the celebrated collection of M. Sauvageot, between whom and Pons (as between their respective museums) there were certain points of resemblance. For M. Sauvageot, like Pons, was a musician of limited means, who, fired by Pons's love of art and Pons's hatred of the illustrious plutocrats who form cabinets of antiquities in order that they may enter into adroit competition with the regular dealers, has adopted Pons's system and method of procedure. For all these specimens of cunning workmanship, these miracles of industry, Pons (in common with his rival, his competitor, his antagonist) cherished in his heart a passion insatiable as that of the miser, strong as that of a lover for a beautiful mistress. As for a *re-sale* in the auction-rooms of the Rue des Jeuneurs, under the hammer of the auctioneer, *that* seemed to Pons to amount to nothing less than the crime of Lèse-bric-à-brac! He kept his museum, with the intention of deriving from it hourly pleasure; for those minds which Nature has endowed with the power of admiring great works of art, possess the sublime faculty of the genuine lover. The object of their passion yields to them the self-same pleasure yesterday, to-day, and forever. Satiety is unknown to them; and masterpieces, fortunately, are perennially young.

From all that precedes, the reader will gather that the object which the old man was carrying with such paternal care was one of those dazzling "finds" which we bear off—with how much rapture, you, oh, ye amateurs! understand full well!

At the first outlines of this biographical sketch, every reader will be tempted to exclaim: "Well, in spite of his ugliness, this must be the happiest fellow in the world." And it is undoubtedly true that a mental counter-irritant, in the form of a mania, is a sovereign remedy for ennui and the spleen. All ye who can no longer drink from that vessel which has in every age been termed *the cup of pleasure*, apply yourselves to the task of collecting—no matter what: even postage-stamps have been collected—and you will find the solid ingot of happiness coined into small change. A mania! why, 'tis pleasure idealized! Do not, however, envy the worthy Pons, since here, as in all kindred cases, the feeling would be based upon a misconception.

For this man, who was the very incarnation of delicacy—this man, whose moral being drew its only sustenance from an unwearied admiration of the finest achievements of human toil—that glorious struggle with the forces of Nature—was the slave of that sin which, of all the seven deadly sins, God will surely punish with the least severity: Pons was a gourmand. His slender means, combined with his passion for bric-à-brac, entailed upon him a dietetic *régime* so thoroughly distasteful to his appreciative palate that at the outset the old bachelor had solved the difficulty by dining out every day of his life. Now, in the days of the Empire, celebrities, either on account of their scarcity and their slender political pretensions or for some other reason, were in far greater request than they are in this degenerate age; and moreover, it was so easy to achieve reputation as a poet, an author, or a musician, then!

In those days Pons, who was regarded as a probable rival of the Nicolos, the Paers and the Bertons, received so many invitations that he was compelled to jot them down in a memorandum-book, just as an advocate makes a note of the cases to which he has to attend. By way of supporting his character as an artist, Pons presented copies of his musical romances to all his Amphitryons; played the piano for them; brought them tickets for boxes at the Feydeau (one of the theaters for which he worked), got up concerts at their houses, and would sometimes—when he was among relatives—even improvise a little ball, and fiddle for the dancers with his own illustrious fingers. Those were the days when the finest men in France used to exchange sword-cuts with the finest men of the coalition; hence Pons's ugliness passed for originality, in accordance with the grand law promulgated by Molière in the famous couplet that he has put into the mouth of Eliante. When Pons had rendered a service to some *fine woman*, he would sometimes hear himself styled "a charming man;" but that phrase was the *Ultima Thule* of his good fortune.

During this phase of his existence—a phase that lasted for about six years—that is to say, from 1810 till 1816—Pons contracted the fatal habit of dining well, at the expense of hosts who never counted cost, who procured first fruits for him, uncorked for him their choicest wines, set before him the most exquisite desserts, coffee and liqueurs, and, in short, treated him as hosts did treat their guests under the Empire, that epoch when many a private household imitated the splendor of the kings and queens of whom Paris was then full, even to overflowing. For in those days it was the fashion to play at the game of royalty just as it is now the fashion to play at the game of Parliament, by creating a host of societies with their presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries; such as the Flax Society, the Vinicultural Society, the Sericicultural Society, the Agricultural Society, the Industrial Society, and so forth; until at length the craze has risen to such a pitch that we are actually on the hunt for social evils, in order that we may form the doctors of those evils into a society!

A stomach trained as Pons's stomach had been trained, exercises an inevitable influence on the moral nature of a man, and corrupts him in direct proportion to the proficiency of his stomach in things culinary. Sensuality, lurking in every corner of the heart, holds undisputed sway, boldly combats the dictates of the will, drowns the voice of honor, and insists, at all costs, on the satisfaction of its cravings. No pen has ever yet described the exactions of the gullet; under the specious guise of the necessity of supporting life, they escape the eye of literary criticism. Yet the number of persons who have been ruined by the table is incalculable. From this point of view the table, at Paris, is the rival of the courtesan. The former represents income, and the latter expenditure. When Pons, declining as his reputation declined, sunk from the position of an ever-welcome guest to that of a mere parasite, he found himself unable to exchange the well-spread board for the Spartan broth of an eighteen-penny eating-house. Unhappy wight! He shuddered at the thought that his in-

dependence could be secured only at so great a sacrifice. He felt that, rather than forego his habitual good-cheer, the regular succession of each "earliest arrival" in the market, the delicate and dainty little dishes, in short, which (to employ a vulgar but expressive term) he was accustomed to guzzle, he was capable of making the meanest concessions. True bird of plunder, flying away when his crop was full, and warbling an air by way of thanks, Pons even found a certain pleasure in living well at the expense of that society which demanded of him—what? Empty compliments. Like all bachelors who hate their own domiciles, and pass their lives in the domiciles of others, Pons was well versed in those conventional forms and social grimaces which, in the world, pass muster for sentiments, and he would tender compliments as a sort of small change. Persons he judged as if they had been sacks with labels on them; he trusted implicitly to the label, and thrust no curious hand into the sack.

This very tolerable state of affairs lasted for a decade. But what a decade it was! It was a rainy autumn, throughout the whole of which Pons, by dint of rendering himself indispensable in all the houses that he frequented, contrived to dine gratis. But it was a sinister career on which he embarked when he began to undertake the execution of innumerable commissions and to discharge, many a time and oft, the functions of a hall porter or a domestic servant. Repeatedly intrusted with the carrying out of purchases, he became the spy—of one family upon another. Yet his manifold journeys and meannesses procured him no credit whatever. "Pons is a bachelor" (so the phrase would run), "and doesn't know what on earth to do with his time; he's only too glad to trot to and fro for us. But for that what *would* become of him?"

Nor was the chill that old age diffuses around it slow in setting in. 'Tis a contagious east wind, producing its depressing effects upon the moral temperature, especially when the old man, who brings the chill with him, is poor and plain. For to be old and poor and plain—is not *that* a threefold poverty? This, then, was the winter of Pons's life—winter, red-nosed winter, with its pallid cheeks and multiform numbnesses.

From 1836 till 1843 the invitations addressed to Pons were few and far between. The families which still admitted him to their tables, far from courting the society of the parasite, now merely tolerated it, just as we tolerate a tax; while as to giving Pons any credit for his services—even for his substantial services—no one ever even dreamed of such a thing. The family circles, in which the old man's orbit lay, had no respect whatever for the Arts, worshiped nothing save tangible results, and valued those things—and those things only—which they had won for themselves since the Revolution of July; in other words, wealth and a conspicuous social position. Now, since Pons was deficient in that elevation of mind and manner which inspires the *bourgeois* bosom with respectful fear, he had now, naturally enough, sunk some degrees below zero, though without becoming an object of absolute contempt. Keen indeed was the torture to which he was exposed in the *bourgeois* circle that he frequented; but, like all timid persons, he concealed his sufferings, and finally acquired a habit of suppressing his feelings and turning his heart into a kind of sanctuary wherein he would take refuge. Now this is a phenomenon which many superficial persons translate by the word egotism, and it must be admitted that the resemblance between the hermit and the egotist is sufficiently striking to give these calumniators a show of reason as against the man of feeling; especially at Paris, where the citizen of the world observes nothing, where all is rapid as the rolling wave, and fleeting as—a Ministry!

Thus then it happened that on the indictment—the retrospective indictment—for egotism preferred against him, Cousin Pons was found guilty; for society, in the long run, invariably convicts those whom it has once accused. Is it possible to gauge the crushing influence upon the

timid of undeserved disfavor? Who can hope to succeed in painting the misfortunes of Timidity? This situation—a situation which, day by day, was growing worse—will account for the dejection stamped upon the features of this poor musician, who was living upon concessions that were most degrading. Still, every base compliance extorted by a passion from its subject is a bond of union; the greater its demands, the stronger are the links that bind you to it; every sacrifice you make tends to form a negative, imaginary hoard which looks to you like untold wealth. When some *bourgeois*, spacious in the possession of—stupidity—had bestowed upon Pons a glance of insolent patronage, how revengefully would the old musician sip his glass of port, and roll the *quail au gratin* on his tongue, with the muttered reflection: "After all, I have not paid for this too dearly!"

Still, even in this existence, the eye of the moralist will detect some extenuating circumstances. A certain amount of satisfied desire is essential to the sustenance of life. A passionless man, the just man made perfect, is "a faultless monster," a semi-angel with undeveloped wings. Angels are all head in the Catholic mythology; but here on earth the just man made perfect is that insufferable Grandison, for whom the Venus of the crossways would find herself unsexed. Now, if we except the few commonplace adventures that Pons had met with in the course of his Italian tour—adventures that ought to be ascribed to climatic influences—he had never encountered a woman's favoring smile; such, indeed, is the funereal destiny of many a man; but, as for Pons, he was a monster from his very birth! This artist with the tender heart, who was so prone to reverie and so full of delicacy, finding himself thus doomed to play the part imposed upon him by his features, resigned all hope of ever being loved. To him celibacy was a matter of necessity rather than of choice. Good living, then—that vice of virtuous monks—held out her arms to him, and he rushed to her embrace with the same headlong alacrity that he had shown in devoting himself to art, and in his worship of music. What woman is to others, good cheer and bric-à-brac were to Pons; for as to music, music was his bread-winner; and find me, if you can, the man who loves the calling whereby he lives. In the long run 'tis with a profession as it is with marriage: we end by being sensible only to its drawbacks.

Brillat-Savarin has deliberately vindicated the passion of the epicure; but perhaps he has failed to lay sufficient stress upon the real pleasure which we experience at the dinner-table. Digestion, by calling into play all the forces of the human frame, becomes, as it were, an internal combat which, in the case of the gastrolater, is on a level with the intensest joys of love. So vast is the demand made upon the vital energies by the process of digestion, that the brain is obliterated for the benefit of that second brain which has its seat in the diaphragm, and intoxication ensues from the sheer inactivity of all the faculties. The boa-constrictor, for example, that has swallowed a bull, is so completely drunk that it will passively allow itself to be killed; and where is the man past forty who dares to work after dinner? Accordingly, all great men have been abstemious. Invalids in a state of convalescence after a severe illness, to whom we are obliged to administer niggardly rations of carefully selected food, must have frequently experienced the species of stomach-drunkenness that a single chicken's wing will produce. The prudent Pons, whose sole sensual delight was centered in the play of the gastric juices, was habitually in the condition of these convalescent invalids. He exacted from good cheer all the sensations that it can bestow; and, up to the date of which we are speaking, he had enjoyed them every day. But no one can bid farewell to a habit. Many a suicide has paused on the very threshold of death, at the thought of the *café* to which he resorts for his nightly game of dominoes.

III.

THE PAIR OF NUT-CRACKERS.

In 1835 chance compensated Pons for the indifference of the fair sex by furnishing him with what, in colloquial phraseology, is termed "an old man's walking-stick." In that year this old fellow—who had been born old—found in friendship a staff of life, and contracted a matrimonial alliance of that sort from which, and from which alone, social arrangements did not exclude him; he married an old man who, like Pons himself, was a musician. But for the existence of La Fontaine's divine fable, this sketch would have been entitled "The Two Friends." So to have entitled it, however, would have amounted to a literary crime—to a sacrilege from which every genuine man of letters must needs recoil. The masterpiece of our French Æsop—a masterpiece which is at once the outpouring of his heart and the story of his dreams, deserves the exclusive right of bearing that title forever. Yes, the page on which the poet has engraved these three words, "The Two Friends," is one of those inviolable domains—a temple as it were—which generation after generation will enter with respect, and the whole world will visit as long as typography endures.

Pons's friend was a pianoforte teacher. His mode of life and his habits chimed in with those of Pons so well that the latter used to say that, unfortunately for his happiness, he had met his friend too late; for their acquaintanceship, which had been struck up at a prize-distribution in some young ladies' school, did not date further back than the year 1834. Never, perhaps, had two such congenial spirits met upon the wide ocean of humanity—that ocean whose earliest waters welled up in the terrestrial paradise, in opposition to the will of God. In a very short time the two musicians became indispensable one to the other. In the space of eight days, mutual confidences made them, as it were, a pair of brothers—in short, previously to this time Schmucke no more believed in the existence of such a person as Schmucke than Schmucke believed in the existence of such a person as Pons.

We have already said enough to describe these two worthies; but since there are intellects that have no taste for synthetical conciseness, a brief demonstration is necessary to convince the unbelieving.

This pianist, then, like every other pianist, was a German; just as the great Listz and the great Mendelssohn are Germans; just as Steibelt, Mozart and Dusseck, Meyer, Doelher, Thalberg, Hiller, Leopold Mayer, Crammer, Zimmerman, and Kalkbrenner are Germans; just as Hertz, Woetz, Karr, Wolff, Pixis, Clara Wieck, and—to be more specific—just as all Germans are Germans. Now, although Schmucke was a great composer, he could not rise above the rank of a teacher of music; for the audacity necessary to a man of genius who would make his mark was entirely foreign to Schmucke's disposition. The simplicity which characterizes many Germans is not continuous; it is intermittent. When they have reached a certain age, the naïveté they then exhibit is drawn from the sources that supplied their youth (much as water is supplied to a canal), and is employed to irrigate their successes, artistic, scientific, or pecuniary—in fact, they use it as a shield to protect them from suspicion. In France, certain cunning folks adopt the stupidity of the Parisian grocer as a substitute for this German simplicity. But as for Schmucke, he had really retained all the artlessness of his childhood, just as Pons retained, in his attire, the relics of the imperial epoch—that is to say, quite unconsciously.

This true and noble German was performer and audience, both in one. He played to and for himself. He lived in Paris just as a nightingale dwells in its forest; and for a space of twenty years sung on—sole member of his tribe—until the moment when he encountered Pons and found in him a second self. (See "Une Fille d'Eve.")

Pons and Schmucke had a copious and an equal store of that childish sentimentality which distinguishes the Ger-

mans. They both had a passion for flowers; they both felt for natural scenery that admiration which induces the children of the Fatherland to plant their gardens with big bottles, to reflect, in miniature, the landscape which lies as large as life under their very eyes. Both Schmucke and Pons had that propensity for investigation which leads the German *savant* to undertake—in his gaiters!—a journey of a hundred leagues in order to verify a fact that stares him in the face, from the margin of the well beneath the courtyard jasmine. And lastly, both of them exhibited that passion for attaching a psychical significance to the veriest trifles in creation which gives birth to the inexplicable works of John Paul Richter, the drunken revels that Hoffman has committed to print, and the folio fences with which a German will encumber the very simplest questions, delving down into the profoundest depths, at the bottom of which all that we can discover is—a German! Pons and Schmucke were both good Catholics; they accompanied each other to mass regularly, and went through the routine of their religious duties like a couple of children who never had to unburden their consciences to their confessor. They implicitly believed that music—the language of heaven—bore to ideas and sentiments the same relation that ideas and sentiments bear to ordinary speech; and interminable were the conversations which, putting their theory into practice, the two old men held with one another, talking to each other in amœbæan orgies of music, in order, after the manner of lovers, to demonstrate, one to another, that of which they were already entirely convinced. Schmucke was as thoroughly absent-minded as Pons was observant; if Pons was a collector, Schmucke was, as certainly, a dreamer; if Pons rescued beautiful objects belonging to the world of matter, Schmucke studied the beauties that belong to the world of mind. Pons would have espied and purchased a porcelain cup ere Schmucke, musing on some strain from Rossini, Bellini, Beethoven, or Mozart, and ransacking the world of sentiment for the origin or the counterpart of the musical phrase that was running in his head, had got through the operation of blowing his nose. But Schmucke, the thrifty dreamer, whose savings were at the mercy of his mental distraction, and Pons, whose passion made him prodigal, were both landed in the same predicament, on the thirty-first of December. St. Sylvester's day in each revolving year always surprised them, both with empty purses.

It is possible that, but for this friendship, Pons would have succumbed to his afflictions; but so soon as he found a heart into which he could pour his sorrows, life became endurable to him. The first time that he breathed his troubles into Schmucke's ear, the worthy German advised him to live, as he himself lived, on bread and cheese, at home, rather than go out and eat dinners which cost him so dear. Alas! Pons did not venture to confess to Schmucke that, in his organism, heart and stomach were at war; that his stomach readily tolerated that which tortured his heart; and that, cost what it might, he must have a good dinner to relish, just as a man of gallantry must have a mistress to torment. It took Schmucke some time to gain a thorough knowledge of Pons's character; for Schmucke was too intensely German to possess that rapidity of observation which stamps the Frenchman; but when, at length, Schmucke did understand his friend, he loved the poor fellow all the more on account of his failing—in fact, there is no stronger bond of friendship than for one of two friends to believe himself superior to the other. Not even an angel could have breathed a word of disapprobation at the sight of Schmucke rubbing his hands when he discovered how firm a hold the love of good living had gained upon his friend Pons. In fact, on the very next morning after this discovery, the worthy German added to the ordinary breakfast sundry dainties, which he himself had brought in, and continued to provide his friend with fresh ones every day; for, since Pons and Schmucke had foregathered, they breakfasted together in their own lodgings.

To suppose that the two friends had escaped that Parisian ridicule which never yet spared anything or anybody, would argue a complete ignorance of Paris. Schmucke and Pons, in uniting their riches and their poverty, had conceived the economical idea of living together; and each paid a moiety of the rent of a set of apartments which were very unequally divided between them. Their rooms formed a part of a quiet house in the quiet Rue de Normandie, in the Marais. As they often went out together, and strolled side by side along the same boulevards, the idlers of the quarter had nicknamed them "The Pair of Nut-Crackers." This sobriquet renders it superfluous to paint the portrait of Schmucke here; he was to Pons what the Nurse of Niobe (the celebrated statue in the Vatican) is to the Venus of the Tribune.

Madame Cibot, the portress of this house, was the pivot of "The Pair of Nut-Crackers;" but so important is the part she plays in the drama which terminated in the dissolution of this twin existence, that it is better to reserve her portrait till the moment when she enters on the scene.

That which remains to be said about the moral nature of these two beings, is of a character less readily to be comprehended than anything which has gone before, by ninety-nine out of a hundred readers, in the forty-ninth year of this nineteenth century. This comparative incomprehensibility may be attributed to the prodigious development of the financial element in human nature—a development due to the introduction of railways. Now what remains to be said is but little; yet is it highly important. In fact, the problem is, to convey to the mind of the reader an adequate idea of the extreme sensitiveness of these two hearts; and here let us borrow an illustration from the railways—were it only by way of recouping the capital which they are constantly borrowing from us.

The trains which we are now accustomed to see, speeding along their iron roads, grind to powder, in their progress, minute particles of gravel. Now let such a minute particle—a particle too minute for a passenger to see—be introduced into his renal system, and he will experience the pangs of that most frightful malady, the gravel, which is often fatal. Now that identical particle which, to our existing body social, traveling along its metallic path, with all the rapidity of a locomotive, is nothing more than a mere imperceptible atom of gravel, causing no appreciable annoyance, generated in Pons and Schmucke, who were incessantly exposed to its irritating influence, a kind of gravel of the heart. Sensitive, in the extreme, to the sufferings of others, each of these two poor creatures wept over his inability to aid; while, in regard to his own feelings, each of them was acutely, almost morbidly, susceptible. Neither old age, nor the continual spectacles presented by the drama of Parisian life—in short, nothing, had had power to harden these two pure, fresh, and child-like hearts. The longer they lived, the more keen became their personal sufferings. Thus it is (alas that thus it should be!) with uncorrupted natures, with tranquil thinkers, and with genuine poets, who have held themselves aloof from all excess.

Since the time when these two old men had set up their tents together, they had imported into their occupations (which were almost identical) the harmony of movement that marks the paces of a pair of Parisian hacks. Winter and summer, Pons and Schmucke rose at seven o'clock, and, breakfast over, sallied forth to give the usual lessons in the schools which they served, where they supplied each other's place, in case of need. Toward noon, if his presence were required at a rehearsal, Pons would wend his way to his theater; but all his leisure moments were devoted to *flânerie*. Then, in the evening, the two friends would meet at the theater, where Pons had found a berth for Schmucke, after this wise:

When Pons and Schmucke first met each other, Pons had just obtained, without even asking for it, that field-marshal's bâton of obscure composers—a conductor's wand. It had been conferred upon the poor musician through the influence

of Count Popinot—then a Minister—at the time when that *bourgeois* hero of the Revolution of July procured a theatrical license for one of those friends, the sight of whom brings a blush to the cheek of the successful adventurer, when, as he rolls along in his carriage, he espies some companion of his youth, a poor pedestrian, strapless and down at heel, clad in a coat of problematical hue, and embarked in speculations altogether too vast for his diminished capital. This friend of Count Popinot's, a quondam commercial traveler, had, in by-gone days, rendered important services to the celebrated firm of Popinot; and Anselm Popinot, who, after being twice a Minister, was now a count and a peer of France, not only acknowledged the Illustrious Gaudissard, but, better still, resolved to place the former bagman in a position to renew his wardrobe and replenish his purse; for the heart of the whilom druggist had not been corrupted, either by political life or the vanities of the court of the Citizen King. Gaudissard, who was still, as of yore, devoted to the ladies, asked that the license of a theater, then in a state of insolvency, might be transferred to him; and the Minister, while acceding to his request, took care to send him certain aged admirers of the fair sex, wealthy enough to form a body of substantial sleeping partners, with a passion for feminine attractions. The name of Pons, who was a constant guest at the Hotel Popinot, was inserted in the license; and when, in the year 1834, the association, of which Gaudissard was the leading member, and which, by the way, made a fortune, embraced the notion of realizing, upon the boulevard, that grand idea, an opera for the people, it was found that the ballet-music and the incidental music of the fairy pieces required a tolerable conductor, endowed with some slight talent as a composer: so Pons became the leader of the orchestra. Now the management which preceded the Gaudissard partnership had been too long in a state of bankruptcy to boast a copyist. So Pons introduced Schmucke to the theater, in the capacity of superintendent of the scores—an obscure post, which demands, however, a sound knowledge of music. Acting on the advice of Pons, Schmucke concluded, with the chief of the corresponding department at the Opéra-Comique, an arrangement whereby the old German escaped the purely mechanical part of the work.

Wonderful were the results produced by the co-operation of Schmucke and Pons. Schmucke, whose strong point, like that of all Germans, was *harmony*, looked after the instrumentation of the pieces, to which Pons supplied the airs. Yet, though the fresh unhackneyed beauty of certain *morceaux*, which served as an accompaniment to two or three successful plays, made a forcible impression on the connoisseurs, the word *progress* furnished a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon; they never inquired the names of the composers: so Pons and Schmucke were merged in glory, just as some persons are drowned in their own baths. Now at Paris, especially since 1830, no one can succeed without elbowing *quibuscunque viis*, and with no gentle violence, a most formidable cohort of competitors; no ordinary strength of loin will serve your turn; and as for our two friends, *they* were suffering from that gravel of the heart which clogs all ambitious efforts.

As a general rule, Pons did not make his appearance in the orchestra of his theater till about eight o'clock—the hour at which the pieces that draw commence, and demand the despotic rule of the bâton for their overtures and incidental music. This indulgence exists in most of the minor theaters; but Pons's disinterestedness, in all his dealings with the managers, was such, that he could well afford to take matters easily. Schmucke, moreover, was always ready, in any emergency, to take the place of Pons.

As time rolled on, Schmucke's position in the orchestra had gained stability. The Illustrious Gaudissard had tacitly recognized the usefulness of Pons's collaborator; and since a piano had now become a *sine quâ non* in the orchestra of a theater of any pretensions, a piano was introduced and placed near to the conductor's desk;

in that spot Schmucke—a spontaneous supernumerary — installed himself, and played the instrument gratis. When once the character of this unambitious and unassuming old German was known, all the musicians accepted him without a murmur; and thereupon the manager gave Schmucke a small salary for presiding over those instruments, which, though often necessary, are not to be found in the orchestras of the boulevard theaters—such instruments, for example, as the piano, the viola, the English horn, the violoncello, the harp, the Spanish castanets, the bells, and the various inventions of Sax, etc.; for if the Germans do not understand how to play upon the grand instruments of Liberty, it cannot be denied that they have a natural aptitude for playing on every possible instrument of music.

The two old artists, who were very much beloved at the theater, led a philosophical existence there. They wore scales upon their eyes, in order that they might be blind to all those ugly blots that *must* disfigure a theatrical troupe which includes a *corps de ballet* among its members—a frightful combination, born of the exigencies of the treasury, to be the plague of managers, authors, and musicians alike. The high respect which the worthy and retiring Pons entertained both for himself and for others, had won him the esteem of all with whom he came into contact; and indeed it is true that, in every sphere of society, a life of purity and stainless honesty extorts admiration, even from the most corrupt; and that, at Paris, a fine example of virtue meets with the same success as a big diamond or a rare curiosity. Not an actor, not an author, no, not the most unblushing of the ladies of the ballet, would have even dreamed of hoaxing or playing any practical joke upon Pons or Pons's friend. As for Pons, he would occasionally stroll into the greenroom of the theater; but Schmucke's knowledge of the building was confined to the underground passages that led from the exterior of the house to the orchestra. When the worthy old German was on duty he would sometimes cast a venturesome glance at the body of the house, and address a question or two to the first flute (a young man who had been born at Strasbourg, the scion of a German family from Kehl). Schmucke's question would have reference to those eccentric personages who are, almost invariably, to be seen in the stage-boxes. Little by little the child-like mind of Schmucke (whose education in things social was undertaken by this flutist) was induced to admit that the existence of the *lorette* was not entirely a fable, that there was such things as illicit marriages, that first ladies of the ballet might be recklessly extravagant, and that box-keepers did occasionally carry on a little contraband commerce. To this worthy old man, the very innocencies of vice seemed to be the *ne plus ultra* of Babylonian depravity; and he greeted their rehearsal with a smile, such as he would have accorded to a Chinese arabesque. The intelligent reader will not need to be informed that Pons and Schmucke were both—to use a word that is very much in fashion — *exploités;* but what they lost in money they gained in esteem, and in the good offices that were rendered to them.

After the success of a certain ballet, which laid the foundation of the fortune acquired by the Gaudissard partnership, the managers sent Pons a silver group that was said to be the work of Benvenuto Cellini, and the price of which was so high, that it formed the topic of a greenroom conversation. That price was no less than twelve hundred francs! The poor worthy fellow wanted to return the gift; and Gaudissard had a world of trouble in inducing him to accept it. "Ah!" exclaimed Gaudissard to his partner, "if we could but find actors of the same description!" This twin existence, that was outwardly so unruffled, was, nevertheless, troubled, but it was troubled solely by the vice which Pons hugged so tightly — his ardent passion for dining out. Accordingly, whenever Schmucke happened to be at home while Pons was dressing for dinner, the wor-

thy German would, inwardly, bewail the fatal habit: "If it only made him vatter!" he would frequently ejaculate. And he would ponder over plans for curing Pons of his degrading vice; for that exquisite sense of smell which distinguishes the dog belongs—in things moral—to the genuine friend; he scents from afar the sorrows of his friend, divines the hidden sources of those sorrows, and broods over their remedy.

Pons, who still retained, upon the little finger of his right hand, the diamond ring which, though it is now become ridiculous, fashion permitted the beaus of the Empire to wear; Pons, in whose composition there was far too much of the troubadour and the Frenchman for his peace of mind, did not exhibit, in his countenance, that divine serenity which mitigated the fearful ugliness of Schmucke. Hence the German had gathered, from the melancholy expression of his friend's features, the growing difficulties that rendered his profession of parasite more painful from day to day. In fact it was very natural that, in October, 1844, the number of houses in which Pons could count upon a dinner should be extremely limited; and the poor conductor, being now reduced to the necessity of confining his evolutions to the family circle, had, as we shall see, given to the word family far too extensive a meaning.

The whilom prize-man was cousin-german to the first wife of Monsieur Camusot, the wealthy silk-mercer of the Rue des Bourdonnais. That lady had been a Mademoiselle Pons and sole heiress of one of the celebrated Pons Brothers, Court Embroiderers—a house in which the father and mother of our musician had had an interest. Indeed, they it was who—before the revolution of 1798—had founded the business, which subsequently, in 1815, was sold to Monsieur Rivet by the father of the first Madame Camusot. Her husband, who had retired from business ten years before the opening of this scene, was now, in 1844, a member of the General Council of Manufacturers, a deputy, etc., etc. Pons, having acquired the friendship of the Camusot tribe, considered himself the cousin of the silk-mercer's children by his second wife; although, as a matter of fact, the poor musician was not even connected with them.

The second Madame Camusot was a Mademoiselle Cardot. Pons, accordingly, as being a relative of the Camusots, introduced himself into the numerous family of the Cardots—another tribe of *bourgeois*, which, with all its alliances, formed a complex society, no less powerful than that of the Camusots.

Cardot, the notary, brother of the second Madame Camusot, had married a Mademoiselle Chiffreville. Now, the well-known family of Chiffreville—the queen of the trade in chemical products—had business relations with the wholesale druggists, of whom Monsieur Anselm Popinot, who, as every one knows, was carried by the Revolution of July into the very innermost circle of dynastic politics, was the leading spirit.

Thus our friend Pons, following in the wake of the Camusots and Cardots, planted himself upon the Chiffrevilles, and, through them, upon the Popinots; always—be it understood—in his capacity of cousin to the cousins.

This slight glimpse of the old man's social relations—in this their final stage—will explain how it came to pass that, in the year 1844, he still retained a footing in the establishments:

Firstly, of Monsieur le Comte Popinot, peer of France, ex-Minister of Agriculture and Commerce;

Secondly, of Monsieur Cardot, ex-notary, mayor, and deputy for one of the arrondissements of Paris;

Thirdly, of Monsieur Camusot, senior, deputy, member of the Council-General of Manufactures, and on the high-road to the peerage;

Fourthly, of Monsieur Camusot, junior, son of Camusot, senior, by his first wife, and therefore the real, in fact the only real, cousin of Pons—even this cousin was a cousin once removed.

The younger Camusot, who, to distinguish himself from his father and his half-brother, had added to his own name that of his estate (De Marville), was, in 1844,

President of one of the Divisions of the Court Royal of Paris. The ex-notary Cardot had married his daughter to Berthier, his successor, and Pons, as a client of the office, had managed to retain a seat at this table. He termed it a dinner *par-devant notaire.*

Such was the *bourgeois* firmament which Pons styled his family, and in which, by dint of many a painful effort, he had preserved the right of plying knife and fork. Of the ten houses which our artist frequented, the house of President Camusot owed him the warmest welcome; for *that* was the object of his most assiduous attentions. But, unfortunately, the president's wife, a daughter of the late Monsieur Thirion, groom of the chamber to Louis XVIII. and Charles X., had never given a cordial reception to her husband's first cousin once removed. In his attempts to mollify this formidable relative, Pons had simply wasted his time; for after giving gratuitous lessons to Mademoiselle Camusot, he found that he could not make a musician of the young lady, who, by the way, had a slight tendency to red hair.

Now it was to the house of his cousin the president that Pons, with his hand protecting his precious treasure, was, at the moment when our story opens, wending his way. On entering the house he always fancied himself at the Tuileries; so profoundly was he impressed by the solemn green draperies, the carmelite-colored hangings, the Wilton carpets and somber furniture of this abode; in which everything exhaled an atmosphere of magisterial severity. Yet—strange phenomenon!—at Popinot's house in the Rue Basse-du-Rempart Pons felt quite at home, doubtlessly on account of the objects of art to be found there; for the former Minister had, since his introduction to the political world, imbibed the mania for collecting fine works of art—by way of opposition, no doubt, to the art of politics, which secretly collects the very foulest works of man.

IV.

ONE OF THE THOUSAND JOYS OF A COLLECTOR.

THE President de Marville lived in the Rue de Hanovre, in a house that his wife had bought ten years ago, after the demise of both her parents, who left her their savings, amounting to about one hundred and fifty thousand francs.

This house, whose street-front, in consequence of its northern aspect, is somewhat gloomy, has, at the back, a southern aspect that looks upon a court, beyond which lies a good garden. The president occupied the whole of the first floor, which, in the reign of Louis Quinze, had formed the habitation of one of the wealthiest financiers of the period. The second floor was let to a rich old lady; and thus this abode presents the dignified and tranquil appearance that becomes the dwelling of a judge.

The remnants of the magnificent estate of Marville, to the acquisition of which the president had devoted the savings of twenty years, as well as the fortune which he had inherited from his mother, consisted of the château itself—one of those splendid monuments which are still to be met with in Normandy—and a substantial farm let at a rental of twelve thousand francs. The château stands in a park of about two hundred and fifty acres. This luxury, which, in these times, may be called princely, costs the president three thousand francs per annum; so that the estate yields a net income of nine thousand francs only. These nine thousand francs, together with the president's salary, brought his income up to a total of twenty thousand francs—a sum which would seem to be adequate, especially when it is considered that, as the only issue of his father's first marriage, Monsieur de Marville would come in for one half of his father's fortune.

But residence in Paris, and the expenses entailed on the president and his wife by their social position, swallowed up almost the whole of their income. Indeed, up to the year 1843, they had been hard pushed to make both ends meet.

This inventory will show the reader why Mademoiselle de Marville, a young lady of twenty-three summers, notwithstanding her portion, which amounted to 100,000 francs, and her expectations, so frequently and skillfully (though fruitlessly) held forth by way of bait, still remained unmarried.

For the last five years Cousin Pons had listened to the lamentations of Madame la Presidente, who was doomed to behold all the deputy judges married, and the new judges of the tribunal made happy fathers, while she had been spending her time and energies in a fruitless attempt to dazzle with Mademoiselle de Marville's expectations the unenchanted gaze of young Viscount Popinot, the eldest son of the prince of the drug trade, for whose benefit—at least so said the envious ones of the Rue des Lombards—quite as much as for the benefit of the younger branches of the royal family, the Revolution of July had been brought about.

When Pons had reached the Rue Choiseul, and was just on the point of turning into the Rue de Hanovre, there stole over him that inexplicable sensation which often besets the pure in heart, and inflicts on them tortures as keen as any that the greatest criminal can experience at sight of a gendarme. The question—"How will the president's wife receive me?"—was the sole source of Pons's sufferings. That fragment of gravel which lacerated the fibers of his heart had never worn itself round; on the contrary, its angles had grown sharper; and the servants of this mansion had incessantly whetted the edges of the stonelet. In fact, the slight esteem which the Camusots entertained for Pons, his demonetization—so to speak—among the members of this family, influenced its servants, who, without being positively rude to Pons, regarded him as a variety of the species pauper.

His principal foe was a certain Madeleine Vivet, a thin and shriveled spinster, who acted as lady's-maid to Madame de Marville and her daughter. This Madeleine, spite of her blotchy complexion—perhaps, indeed, in consequence of that complexion and her viperine length of body—had taken it into her head to become Madame Pons. But in vain did Madeleine parade, before the eyes of the old bachelor, the twenty thousand francs which she had contrived to scrape together. Pons refused a happiness that was so deeply tinged with—red. So this Dido of the antechamber, who wanted to become the cousin of her master and mistress, played the poor musician many a scurvy trick. When she heard the worthy man upon the staircase—"Here comes the sponger!" she would exclaim; taking care that, if possible, he should overhear her. If (in the absence of the footman) she waited at table, she took care to give her victim plenty of water and very little wine; and she filled his glass so full that it was a hard matter for him to convey it to his lips without spilling some of its contents. Then she would forget to serve him, until the president's wife—in a voice that made her husband blush—would order her to do so; or else she would upset the sauce over his clothes. In short, it was a case of war carried on by an inferior, certain of impunity, against an unfortunate superior.

In the double capacity of housekeeper and lady's-maid, Madeleine had followed the fortunes of Monsieur and Madame Camusot since their marriage. She had seen them in all the penury of their first start in life, at the time when they lived in the provinces, and Monsieur Camusot was a judge of the tribunal of Alençon. She had lightened the burden of existence for them, when, in 1828, Monsieur Camusot threw up the presidency of the tribunal of Mantes, and came to Paris, where he was appointed a *juge d'instruction*. Madeleine, therefore, was far too intimately connected with the family to lack grounds for wreaking vengeance on it. Beneath her desire to play her haughty and ambitious mistress the trick of becoming her husband's cousin, there lurked, beyond a doubt, one of those covert hatreds which are born of a trifle, small as the pebble that sets the avalanche in motion.

"Here is your cousin Pons, madame,

and still in that spencer of his. He really ought to tell me how he has managed to preserve it during these five-and-twenty years." Such was Madeleine's intimation to her mistress.

Hearing a man's footstep in the little room that lay between her drawing-room and bedchamber, Madame Camusot looked at her daughter and shrugged her shoulders.

"You always contrive to give me warning so cleverly, Madeleine, as to leave me no time to determine how to act," said Madame Camusot.

"John is out, madame; I was alone; and when Monsieur Pons rang the bell I opened the door to him. As he is almost one of the family, I could not prevent his following me. He is outside now, taking off his spencer."

"My poor Minette," quoth the lady to her daughter, "we are fairly caught; now we shall have to dine at home." Then seeing how utterly woe-begone her dear Minette appeared, she resumed:

"Come, shall we rid ourselves of him for good?"

"Oh! poor man!" replied Mademoiselle Camusot, "would you deprive him of one of his dinners?"

Hereupon the little anteroom resounded with the affected cough of a man who adopts this method of saying, "I can overhear you."

"Well, show him in," said Madame Camusot, shrugging her shoulders. "You have called so early, cousin," said Cecile Camusot, assuming a slightly coaxing air — "you have called so early that you have come upon us just as mamma was going to dress."

Cousin Pons, on whom the movement of the shoulders had not been thrown away, was so deeply wounded that he could find no compliment to utter, and took refuge in the profound remark: "You are as charming as ever, little cousin." Then turning to the matron and bowing, he continued: "You will bear me no grudge, dear cousin, for coming a little earlier than usual, for I have brought you what you did me the pleasure to ask me for."

And poor Pons, who excruciated the president, the president's wife, and Cecile, every time that he called them "cousin," drew from the side-pocket of his coat an exquisite little oblong box of Saint-Lucia wood divinely carved.

"Oh! I had entirely forgotten all about it!" said Madame Camusot, dryly.

Now, was not this an atrocious thing to say? Was not this a stealing of all merit from the pains taken by her relation, whose only fault was that he was a poor relation?

"But," pursued she, "you are extremely kind, cousin. Am I much in your debt for this little bit of trumpery?"

This question made Pons wince internally; he had looked upon this little trinket as an oblation that would pay for all his dinners.

"I thought that you would allow me to offer it to you as a present," said he, with emotion.

"What do you mean? What do you mean?" exclaimed the lady. "Come now, don't let there be any ceremony between *us*; we know each other quite well enough to speak frankly to one another: I know that you are not rich enough to provide the sinews of war; is it not sufficient that you should have incurred trouble and loss of time in going about from shop to shop?"

"My dear cousin, I don't think that you would care to have this fan, if you were called upon to give for it what it is worth," replied the poor man in his wrath, "for it is one of Watteau's masterpieces; both of its sides were painted by him. But make your mind easy, cousin; the fan did not cost me the hundredth part of its value as a work of art."

To say to a rich person: "You are poor," is like telling the archbishop of Granada that his sermons are rubbish. Madame de Marville was far too proud of her husband's position, of being the owner of the estate of Marville, and of her invitations to the court balls, not to be cut to the very quick by such an observation, especially when it emanated from a mis-

erable musician, in regard to whom she assumed the part of Lady Bountiful.

"Then the people of whom you buy these things must be very stupid," said the lady, with marked emphasis.

"There is no such thing in all Paris as a stupid shopkeeper," replied Pons, almost dryly.

"It is you who are so clever, then," said Cecile, in order to put an end to the discussion.

"I am clever enough, little cousin, to know the handiwork of Lancret, Pater, Watteau, and Greuze; but, moreover, I was stimulated by a desire to please your dear mamma."

Vain and ignorant, Madame Camusot did not wish to have the appearance of receiving even a trifle from the hands of her parasite; and her ignorance stood her in good stead; the very name of Watteau was unknown to her.

If anything can prove the enormous self-esteem of the collector (which assuredly takes rank with any, for it rivals the self-esteem of the author), 'tis the hardihood displayed by Pons in thus holding his own against his cousin for the first time in the course of twenty years. Amazed at his own audacity, Pons resumed a pacific mien, while he pointed out to Cecile, in detail, the beauties of the delicate carving of the branches of the marvelous fan. But to explain the heartfelt trepidation which seized upon the worthy man, we must give a slight sketch of Madame la Presidente.

At the age of forty-six, Madame de Marville, who had once been fair, plump and fresh—short she always was—had become skinny. Her bulging forehead and retreating mouth, having lost the delicate redeeming tints of youth, now gave to her face, that had always worn a disdainful look, an air of sullenness. Habitual and unresisted despotism in her own house had rendered her features hard and disagreeable; while Time had changed her once fair hair to a harsh chestnut color. Her eyes, still keen and caustic, had a look of magisterial arrogance, big with suppressed envy. In fact, the wife of the president found that, amid the circle of successful *bourgeois* with whom Pons dined, she was almost poor. She could not forgive the wealthy wholesale druggist (the former President of the Tribunal of Commerce) for having successively attained the rank of deputy, of minister, of count and peer. She could not forgive her father-in-law for having, to the detriment of his eldest son, procured his own nomination as deputy of his own arrondissement at the time when Popinot was raised to the peerage. She had been in Paris eighteen years, and was still waiting for her husband to be appointed Counselor of the Court of Cassation, a post from which he was shut out on account of his limited capacity, which was notorious at the palace. The gentleman who in 1844 occupied the post of Minister of Justice regretted that Camusot had been made a president in 1834; but, to mitigate the evil, he had been relegated to the criminal department, where, thanks to his technical training as a *juge d'instruction,* he did good work by making short work of the accused. These various crosses had so worn and worried Madame de Marville (who, by the way, labored under no delusion with regard to her husband's capacity) that they had ended by making her quite terrible. Her disposition, which was originally overbearing, was now soured. Aged rather than old, she assumed all the harshness and dryness of a brusk, with a view to extorting, through the fear which she inspired, all that the world was inclined to withhold. Sarcastic to excess, she had few friends; but she possessed a good deal of influence; for she had gathered round her a circle of old female pietists, of her own stamp, who, with an eye to reciprocity, lent her their support. Thus the relations of poor Pons toward this devil in petticoats were exactly like those which exist between a pupil and a master who speaks only through the rod; so that the lady was entirely at a loss to understand the sudden boldness of her cousin: she was completely ignorant of the value of the fan.

"And pray where did you find this?"

inquired Cecile, as she examined the treasure.

"In the Rue de Lappe, in the shop of a broker who had just brought it from a château near Dreux, that has just been pulled down. The name of the château is Aulnay; Madame de Pompadour occasionally stayed there, before she built Menars. They have preserved some of the most splendid woodwork that was ever known; it is so beautiful that Lienard, our celebrated wood-carver, has retained two oval frames for models, as being the *ne plus ultra* of the art. Ah! there were treasures there, indeed! My broker found his fan in an inlaid *bonheur-du-jour,* which I should have bought if I collected such things; but that is far beyond my reach! Why, a piece of furniture by Reisener is worth three or four thousand francs! In Paris people are beginning to understand that the famous inlayers (French and German) of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, produced veritable pictures in wood. The merit of a collector consists in getting the start of fashion. Mark what I say: five years hence the Frankenthal porcelain, which I have been collecting for the last twenty years, will be twice as dear as the soft porcelain of Sèvres."

"What do you mean by Frankenthal?" asked Cecile.

"It is the name of the china manufactory of the Elector Palatine; 'tis older than our Sèvres works; just as the famous gardens of Heidelberg, which Turenne destroyed, had the misfortune to exist before the gardens of Versailles were laid out. Sèvres has imitated Frankenthal to a considerable extent. We must, in justice, admit that the Germans produced, in Saxony and the Palatinate, some admirable works, before we did."

Mother and daughter looked at each other, as if Pons had been talking Chinese; for the ignorance and narrowness of the Parisians are beyond conception. They learn what we try to teach them only when they want to be taught.

"And how do you recognize Frankenthal porcelain?"

"*Why the signature!*" exclaimed Pons, with animation. "All these exquisite masterpieces are signed. Frankenthal china has a C and a T (Charles-Theodore) intertwined, and surmounted by a prince's coronet; old Dresden has the two swords and the ordinal number in gold; Vincennes used to sign with a horn; Vienna has a V fermed and barred; Berlin has the double bar; Mayence the wheel; Sèvres the double LL; while the queen's porcelain has an A (which stands for Antoinette) surmounted by the royal crown. In the eighteenth century, all the sovereigns of Europe competed with one another in the manufacture of porcelain; they stole each other's workmen. Watteau designed services for the Dresden works, and his productions now command exorbitant prices (one needs to know them well; for nowadays Dresden is reproducing and imitating them). In those days some admirable things were produced, things the like of which will never see the light again."

"What nonsense!"

"Nay, cousin; 'tis as I say. There are certain kinds of marquetry and porcelain that will never again be produced, any more than the pictures of Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Van Eyck, and Cranach will be reproduced. Why! the Chinese are extremely skillful, extremely clever—are they not? Well, *they* are now producing copies of their choicest china, that which is known as Grand-Mandarin; well! two vases of Grand-Mandarin, of the largest size, are worth six thousand, eight thousand, nay, even ten thousand francs! and you can get a modern copy for two hundred francs!"

"You must be joking!"

"Cousin, these prices astonish you; but they are a mere nothing. Not only does a complete dinner service for twelve, made of soft Sèvres ware (which is not porcelain), fetch a hundred thousand francs; but *that* is the invoice price. Such a service cost fifty thousand livres at Sèvres in 1750. I have seen the original invoices."

"Let us come back to this fan," said

Cecile, in whose eyes the trinket had the fault of looking too old.

"You see," said Pons, "I began my hunt directly your dear mamma did me the honor to ask me for a fan. I examined all the dealers' shops in Paris, without finding anything that was really fine; for I wanted to give Madame la Presidente a *chef-d'œuvre,* and I *did* think of offering her the fan of Marie Antoinette—the most beautiful of all celebrated fans; but yesterday I was dazzled by this divine masterpiece, which must certainly have been bespoken by Louis Quinze himself. Now, why did I go to the Rue de Lappe, to search for a fan in the shop of an Auvergnat, who deals in copper, old iron, and gilt furniture? Well, for my own part, I believe that works of art have minds; that they know an amateur when they see him, that they beckon to him, that they call out to him: 'Hist! hist!'" Here Madame Camusot indulged in another shrug of the shoulders, and looked at her daughter; but this rapid pantomime escaped Pons's notice.

"I know them all, these rascals! 'What novelty have you, Daddy Monistrol? Have you any door-tops?' I said to this dealer, who allows me just to cast an eye over his purchases, before the wholesale buyers come. In answer to my inquiry, Monistrol told me how Lienard, who was doing some very fine carving for royalty, in the chapel of Dreux, had, at the sale of Aulnay, rescued the carved wood-work from the Paris dealers, who were on the lookout for porcelain and inlaid furniture. 'I didn't pick up much,' replied Monistrol, 'but *that,*' said he, pointing to the *bonheur-du-jour,* 'will pay the expenses of my journey.' 'Tis a perfect marvel, with designs by Boucher, executed in marquetry most artistically; one feels inclined to go down on one's knees before it. 'Look here, sir,' says Monistrol, 'I have just come across this fan in a little drawer, which was locked, and had no key, so that I had to force it open. You might perhaps tell me where I can sell it.' And so saying, forth he pulls this little box of carved Saint-Lucia wood. 'Look!' says he, 'it's in that Pompadour style that looks like flowered Gothic.' 'Yes,' said I, 'the box *is* pretty; the box might suit me; for as to the fan, my worthy Monistrol, I have no Madame Pons to give the old trinket to; besides, one can buy new ones that are very pretty; they paint these vellums, nowadays, marvelously, and very cheap. Are you aware that there are two thousand painters in Paris?' And so saying I carelessly opened the fan, suppressing my admiration, and looking with a cold eye at these little pictures, the freedom and finish of which are exquisite: I held in my hand the fan of Madame Pompadour!—a work that had taxed the energies of Watteau to the very utmost! 'How much do you want for the piece of furniture?' I inquired. 'Oh! a thousand francs; I have been offered that for it already.' I then named, as the price of the fan, a sum proportioned to the probable expenses of his journey. Thereupon we looked each other full in the face, and I saw that my man was caught. Quick as thought I clap the fan into the box, to prevent the Auvergnat from examining it, and I go into ecstasies over the workmanship of the box, which is certainly a perfect gem. 'If I buy the fan, 'tis only for the sake of the box; it is only the box that tempts me, look you. As for the *bonheur-du-jour,* you will get more than a thousand francs for that; look at the chiseling of this copper; what models! You may make a good thing out of that; it has never been copied; everything that was made for Madame de Pompadour was unique.' And my man, warming up over his *bonheur-du-jour,* forgets all about the fan, and allows me to have it for nothing, in exchange for my revelation of the beauties of the piece of furniture by Reisener. So there you are! But it requires a lot of practice to be able to drive such bargains. It is a struggle of eye against eye; and what an eye is the eye of a Jew or an Auvergnat!"

The wonderful acting, the animation of the old man, as he narrated the triumph of his subtilty over the ignorance of the broker, formed a subject fit for the brush of a Dutch artist. But it was all thrown

away upon Madame Camusot and her daughter, who, while they exchanged glances that betokened indifference and disdain, mentally exclaimed : "What an original !"

"And that sort of thing amuses you?" asked the president's wife.

This question *froze* poor Pons; he felt inclined to strike the woman.

"Why, my dear cousin," replied he, "it is a masterpiece-hunt—a hunt in the course of which you find yourself confronted by adversaries who defend the game ! 'Tis a case of ruse against ruse ! A masterpiece defended by a Norman, an Auvergnat, or a Jew !—why 'tis like the fairy tales in which you find a princess guarded by enchanters !"

"And how do you know that this fan is by Watt—what d'ye call him ?"

"Watteau, dear cousin ; one of the greatest of French painters in the eighteenth century ! Look here—don't you perceive the signature ?" said Pons, pointing to one of the principal scenes, representing a round, danced by great ladies disguised as peasant girls, and by grand gentlemen in the garb of shepherds. "How seductive ! What warmth ! What coloring ! And 'tis all executed at a single stroke, like a writing-master's flourish. There is not a trace of effort in it ! And see, on the other side, you have a ball in a drawing-room ! What decorations ! And then how well it is preserved ! You see the ferule is of gold, and is finished off on either side with a little ruby, which I have polished !"

"That being so, cousin, I cannot accept from you so valuable a present. You had better sell the fan, and invest the proceeds," said Madame Camusot, though she was longing to keep the magnificent fan.

"It is high time," said the worthy man, recovering all his self-possession, "that that which has been in the service of Vice should be placed in the hands of Virtue. It will have taken a century to work *that* miracle. You may rely on this, that no princess at court will have anything that can compare with this masterpiece; for, unfortunately, it is characteristic of human nature to do more for a Pompadour than for a virtuous queen."

"Very well; I accept the fan," said Madame Camusot, smiling. "Cecile, my little angel, go and help Madeleine to see that the dinner is worthy of our cousin."

The president's wife wished to square accounts with Pons; and this direction, which, in violation of all the dictates of good taste, was uttered aloud, looked so like the discharging of a debt that poor Pons blushed like a young girl caught tripping. It was some time ere this pebble, of abnormal size, ceased to rattle in the old man's heart.

Cecile, meanwhile, a young lady with a decided tendency to red hair, and whose somewhat formal manner recalled her father's judicial gravity, and had a touch of her mother's dryness, now disappeared, leaving poor Pons alone, to tackle the terrible Madame Camusot.

V.

ONE OF THE THOUSAND AFFRONTS A PARASITE HAS TO ENDURE.

"My little Lili is very pleasing," said Madame Camusot, still using the childish abbreviation that had formerly been applied to Cecile's name.

"Charming," replied the musician, twiddling his thumbs.

"I can't understand the times we live in at all," pursued the lady. "What is the use of having a president of the Court Royal of Paris, a commander of the Legion of Honor, for your father, and, for your grandfather a millionaire deputy, who is sure some day to be a peer of France, and is at the head of the wholesale silk trade, I should very much like to know?"

The zeal of the president on behalf of the new dynasty had recently procured him a commander's ribbon—a favor which certain envious persons ascribed to the friendship that existed between him and Popinot.

That Minister, notwithstanding his modesty, had, as we have seen, allowed himself to be made a count—"For my son's sake"—said he to his numerous friends.

"In these days," replied Pons, "the one thing needful is—money. 'Tis only the rich who are respected and—"

"How would it have been then if Heaven had spared my poor little Charles?"

"Oh! with two children, you would be poor!" replied the cousin. "That is the result of the equal division of property; but make your mind easy; Cecile will make a good match after all. I know of no young lady so highly accomplished."

You see to what a degree Pons had learned to degrade his intellect, when he was beneath the roof of his Amphitryons. When there he echoed their ideas, with vapid comments of his own, like the chorus in a Greek play. He did not dare to give rein to that originality which is characteristic of the artist, and which had, in his youth, flowed freely from his lips, in subtle strokes of wit, though it was now well-nigh extinguished, through his habitual self-effacement, and was checked, whenever it appeared, as in the scene which we have just described.

"But though my dowry was only twenty thousand francs *I* found a husband—"

"In the year 1819, cousin," interrupted Pons, "and then it was *you*, a woman of intellect, a young lady patronized by Louis XVIII.!"

"But still my daughter is a perfect angel, and a girl of talent; she is full of heart, and she has a marriage portion of a hundred thousand francs, to say nothing of her large expectations; yet she remains upon our hands—"

Madame de Marville went on talking about her daughter and herself for twenty minutes; abandoning herself to the lamentations peculiar to mothers who are "under the dominion" of daughters in want of a husband. Throughout the period of twenty years, during which the old musician had been in the habit of dining from time to time at the house of Camusot, his only cousin, he had waited—and waited in vain—to hear a single syllable about his own affairs, his mode of life, his health. Nor was this all. Wherever he went he was used as a kind of conduit-pipe for domestic confidences; his reticence being guaranteed by his well-known discretion—an enforced discretion, for a single bold word would have closed the doors of ten houses against him forever. His part of listener, therefore, was backed up by unwavering acquiescence; he greeted every statement with a smile; he never attacked, he never defended, any one. With him, every one was in the right. Accordingly he had ceased to be reckoned as a man; he was—a stomach!

In the course of her long tirade the wife of the president acknowledged to her cousin, with due precaution, that she was inclined to accept, almost without inquiry, any suitor who might seek her daughter's hand. She even went so far as to treat a man of forty-eight as an eligible husband, provided only that he had an income of twenty thousand francs.

"Cecile," she said, "is in her twenty-third year, and should she be so unlucky as to remain single until she is twenty-five or twenty-six, it would be no easy matter to get her married. In such a case people *will* ask themselves how it is that a young woman has remained upon the shelf so long. Indeed there is already a great deal too much talk in our circle about Cecile's position; we have exhausted all the ordinary excuses, such as, 'She is very young,' 'She is perfectly happy at home,' 'She is hard to please, she wants to marry a man of family.' People are beginning to laugh at us, I feel sure of it. Besides, Cecile is tired of waiting; she suffers, poor little—"

"Suffers! In what way?" asked Pons, stupidly.

"Why," replied her mother, in the tones of a duenna, "she feels mortified at seeing all her companions married before her."

"But what has happened, cousin, since the last time I had the pleasure of dining here, that you should be thinking of men

of forty-eight?" humbly inquired the poor musician.

"Why, this has happened," said Madame de Marville. "We were to have had an interview with a counselor of the court, who has a son aged thirty, and whose fortune is considerable. Monsieur de Marville would, by sacrificing a certain sum, have procured for the son the post of referendary at the Court of Accounts, where he is already employed as a supernumerary; when, lo, and behold! they come and tell us that the young fellow has been mad enough to rush off to Italy, on the track of a duchess from Mabille. It is merely a refusal in disguise. They think that a young man, who, in consequence of the death of his mother, is in the present enjoyment of an income of thirty thousand francs, is too good for us. So you must pardon us our bad temper, dear cousin; you came upon us in the very midst of the crisis."

While Pons was cudgeling his brains for one of those complimentary rejoinders which always came to him too late, when he was in the presence of an Amphitryon whom he feared, in came Madeleine, who handed Madame Camusot a little note, and stood waiting for the answer. The billot ran as follows:

"How would it be, dear mamma, if we were to pretend that this little note has been sent to us from the Palace of Justice by my father, directing you to take me with you to dine at his friend's, with a view to renewing the negotiations for my marriage? Cousin Pons would then go away and leave us at liberty to prosecute our plans with reference to the Popinots."

"By whom did your master send this note?" asked the president's wife, emphatically.

"By one of the palace attendants," replied Madeleine, the lean, unblushingly.

By this answer to her mistress's question the old waiting-woman intimated that she had helped the disconcerted damsel to hatch this little plot.

"Say that my daughter and I will be there at half-past five."

So soon as Madeleine had left the room Madame Camusot turned to Pons with that look of mock amenity which excites, in a sensitive mind, a sensation akin to that produced by a mixture of vinegar and milk upon the palate of an epicure, and said:

"My dear cousin, dinner has been ordered; but you must eat it without our company; for my husband writes to inform me that the marriage scheme is on foot again, and that we are to dine with the counselor. You know well that you and I don't stand upon ceremony with one another. Make yourself perfectly at home here. (You see how frank I am with *you*, from whom I have no secrets.) I am sure you would not like to be the cause of my little angel's marriage being frustrated, would you?"

"*I*, cousin, *I*; who, on the contrary, would like to find a husband for her; but in the sphere in which I move—"

"Your chances are certainly very slight," chimed in Madame Camusot, insolently. "So you will stay, won't you? Cecile will keep you company while I am dressing."

"Oh! cousin, I can dine elsewhere," said the good fellow; for though great was the pain he felt at the manner in which the lady taxed him with his indigence, his horror at the prospect of being left to the tender mercies of the servants was greater still.

"But why dine elsewhere? Dinner is ready; the servants would eat it if you didn't."

When Pons heard this terrific phrase, he jumped up as if he had received the discharge of a galvanic battery, bowed distantly to his cousin, and went in search of his spencer. The door of Cecile's bedroom, which opened into the little anteroom, stood ajar; so that Pons, glancing at the mirror in front of him, saw the young lady shaking her sides with laughter and communicating with her mother by means of nods and gestures which plainly showed the old musician that he was the victim of some unworthy hoax. Restraining his tears, he slowly descended the staircase, knowing that he had re-

ceived his dismissal from that house, though ignorant why he had received it. "I am too old now," said he to himself. "The world hates old age and poverty—two ugly things. In future I will go nowhere without an invitation." Heroic phrase!

The door of the kitchen, which was upon the ground-floor opposite to the porter's lodge, was frequently left open; as it often is in those houses which are occupied by their owners, and of which the carriage gates are always shut. So Pons could hear the laughter of the cook and of the footman, to whom Madeleine was retailing the trick that had been played upon Pons—for she did not suppose he would evacuate the place so promptly. The footman, for his part, highly approved of the joke that had been perpetrated at the expense of the constant visitor, who, as the footman said, never gave him more than half a crown by way of Christmas-box!"

"Yes; but still, if he takes the hump and don't come back any more, it will be three francs out of our pockets on New-year's-day," remarked the cook.

"And pray how is he to know anything about it?" said the footman, in answer to the cook.

"Bah!" said Madeleine. "A little sooner or a little later, what does it matter to *us?* The folks at whose houses he dines are so heartily sick of him that he'll soon be sent about his business by them one and all."

Just at this moment the voice of the old musician was heard calling to the portress. "The string, if you please." This doleful cry was received in the kitchen with the deepest silence.

"He was listening," said the footman.

"Well, so much the *worser*, or rather so much the better," retorted Madeleine. "He's a regular scum."

The poor man—whom not a word of what passed in the kitchen had escaped—overheard this last phrase also; and proceeded homeward in a state closely resembling that of an old woman after a desperate struggle with a murderer. Muttering to himself, he hastened onward with convulsive speed; for wounded honor hurried him along like a straw driven before a hurricane, until at five o'clock he found himself upon the Boulevard du Temple without in the least knowing how he got there; yet, strange to say, he did not feel in the slightest degree hungry. But in order that the reader may understand the revolution in Pons's domestic arrangements that his return home at this unwonted hour was about to produce, the promised information about Madame Cibot must here be given.

VI.

SPECIMEN OF THE PORTER (MALE AND FEMALE).

THE Rue de Normandie is one of those streets in the midst of which a man may easily fancy himself in the country. It is a street in which the grass grows luxuriantly, in which a passenger creates a sensation, and the inhabitants of which all know each other. The houses in it were built in the reign of Henri Quatre, at a time when it was intended to build a quarter, each of whose streets should bear the name of a province, and in the center of which there was to be a grand square dedicated to France. The idea of the Quartier de l'Europe was a plagiary of this scheme; for the world is perpetually repeating itself in all places and in all things—even in matters of speculation.

The house in which the two musicians dwelt was originally an old mansion with a court in front of it and a garden in the rear; but a street façade was added to it during that part of the last century when the Marais was in so much vogue. The two friends occupied the whole of the second floor of the original mansion.

This double house belonged to a Monsieur Pillerault, an octogenarian, who left the management of it entirely in the hands of Monsieur and Madame Cibot, who had acted as his door-keepers for six-and-twenty years. Now since the emoluments of a porter in the Marais are not

sufficient to enable him to live upon them alone, Monsieur Cibot to his perquisites—the sou in the livre and the fagot in the load—added the produce of his personal industry; he was what many a porter is—a tailor. As time rolled on Cibot gave up working as a journeyman; for, in consequence of the confidence reposed in him by the small shop-keepers in the neighborhood, he acquired the exclusive privilege of patching, renovating, and fine-drawing all coats to be found within a perimeter of three streets. His lodge was large and healthy, having a bedroom annexed to it; so that the Cibot household was regarded by all the gentlemen who exercised the functions of porter in the neighborbood as one of the most highly favored establishments of its kind.

Cibot was a short, stunted little man, who, by dint of sitting day after day, with his legs crossed Turk-wise beneath him upon a table that was exactly on a level with the grated window that looked upon the street, had acquired a complexion that was almost olive-colored. His trade brought him in about two shillings a day, and he still pursued it in spite of his fifty-eight years; but then fifty-eight is the prime of life for a porter; when he has reached that age his lodge has become to him what the shell is to the oyster, and moreover—*he is known in the district!*

Madame Cibot, who had once been famous as the pretty oyster-girl of the Cadran-Bleu, had quitted her post in that establishment for the sake of Cibot when she had attained the age of twenty-eight, and had run the gauntlet of all those adventures which a pretty oyster-girl encounters without the trouble of seeking them. The beauty of women belonging to the lower classes is short-lived; especially when they posted, like an espalier-tree, at the door of a restaurant, where their features grow coarse through exposure to the heat-rays of the kitchen, and their skin is interpenetrated by the contents of many a half-emptied wine-bottle, shared with the waiters of the establishment; in fact, no flower matures more rapidly than that of a pretty oyster-girl.

Fortunately for Madame Cibot, marriage and the life of a portress came to her in time to preserve her charms; and accordingly a perfect model for Rubens, she retained a masculine style of beauty which her rivals of the Rue de Normandie sought to disparage, calling her "a great fat lollop." The tones of her skin might be compared to the appetizing glaze upon lumps of Isigny butter, while, notwithstanding her stoutness, she displayed an incomparable agility in the exercise of her calling. Madame Cibot had now arrived at that time of life when women of her type are obliged to—shave; in other words, she was forty-eight. A portress with a mustache is one of the strongest guarantees for order and security that a landlord can possibly have! Had Delacroix but seen Madame Cibot, leaning proudly on the handle of her broom, he would assuredly have painted her in the character of Bellona! Singular as the statement may appear, it was ordained that the position of the Cibots, baron and feme (to use the legal style) should one day influence the destiny of the two friends. The faithful historian therefore is obliged to enter into sundry details concerning the porter and his wife.

The house which they superintended brought in about eight thousand francs a year; for, in that part of it which abutted on the street, there were three complete sets of apartments occupying the whole depth of the building; while in the old mansion that stood between court and garden there were three other sets. Then, in addition, there was a shop that opened on to the street and was occupied by a marine store dealer named Remonencq, who, having for some months past assumed the rank of an old curiosity dealer, was so well acquainted with Pons's attainments in bric-à-brac-ology that from the recesses of his shop he would bow to the old musician as he passed to and from the house. The rental of the house then being about eight thousand francs, the sou per livre yielded about four hundred

francs per annum to the Cibots, who, moreover, had nothing to pay for lodging or fuel. Now, since Cibot's earnings amounted, on an everage, to between seven and eight hundred francs a year, the income of the worthy couple (Christmas-boxes included) reached a total of sixteen hundred francs, every doit of which they spent; for the scale of living was higher than that of the lower orders. "We can live but once," was a favorite saying with Madame Cibot, who, born during the Revolution, was, as is clear, quite ignorant of the catechism.

Through her connection with the Cadran-Bleu, this portress with the scornful orange-colored eye had acquired—and she still retained—a certain skill in the art of cookery which made her husband an object of envy to all his fellow-porters. Thus it came to pass that the Cibots, having arrived at full maturity, and being indeed on the verge of old age, had not laid by even so much as a hundred francs. Well clothed and well fed, they were, moreover, looked up to in the neighborhood by reason of their six-and-twenty years of unimpeachable integrity. If they had no money neither did they owe a single centime, or *nune centime*, as Madame Cibot phrased it; for the good lady, in talking, was lavish of her *n*'s. Thus she would say to her husband: "You n'are n'a love." Why? As well might you ask the reason of her indifference with regard to religion.

But while both of the Cibots prided themselves on their open and aboveboard mode of life, on the esteem in which they were held throughout six or seven neighboring streets, and on the liberty, which their landlord conceded to them, of ruling the house according to their own good will and pleasure, they groaned in secret over their lack of invested capital. Cibot complained of pains in his hands and legs, and Madame Cibot was heard to lament that her "poor Cibot" was still obliged to work at his time of life. The day is coming when, after thirty years of such a life, a porter will accuse the government of injustice, and deem himself entitled to be enrolled in the Legion of Honor!

Whenever the tittle-tattle of the district spread abroad the news that such and such a servant, after eight or ten years' service, had been put down in a will for an annuity of three or four hundred francs, lodge after lodge resounded with lamentations, which may give some idea of the envy that pervades the humbler walks of life in Paris. "Ah! it never happens to *us* porters to be mentioned in a will! *We* haven't a chance! And yet we are more useful than servants. Ours is a position of trust; we help to make money; 'tis we who guard the granary; and yet we are treated just like dogs, and there's an end of it." "Life is all chance work," Cibot would say, as he took a coat home. "If I had only left Cibot to look after the lodge," Madame Cibot would exclaim, as with her hands resting on her salient hips she stood chatting to a neighbor, "if I had but left Cibot to look after the lodge, and taken a situation as cook, we should have had as good as thirty thousand francs invested by this time! I've made a mess of life all along o' living rent free in a good snug lodge, and wanting for nothing."

When, in 1836, the two friends came and occupied in common the second story of the old mansion, they caused a kind of revolution in the Cibot household; for both Schmucke and Pons having been accustomed to employ the porter or portress of the house in which they lived as their housekeeper, were entirely of one mind when they installed themselves in the Rue de Normandie as to coming to some arrangement with Madame Cibot. Madame Cibot, accordingly, became their housekeeper at a salary of twenty-five francs per month—that is to say, twelve and a half francs for each of them.

After the lapse of a year the promoted portress reigned supreme over the establishment of the two old bachelors just as she reigned supreme over the house of Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of Madame la Comtesse Popinot; their busi-

ness was her business; and she always spoke of them as "My two gentlemen." In short, when she found that the Pair of Nut-Crackers were gentle as lambs, easy-going and unsuspicious, in fact thorough children, she obeyed the instincts of her heart — the heart of a woman of the people—and began to protect and worship her "two gentlemen;" and to serve them with a devotion so genuine that she even gave them a few words of warning and shielded them from all the impositions which swell the cost of living in Paris. Thus for five-and-twenty francs a month the two bachelors undesignedly and unwittingly obtained a mother; and—the value of that "mother" once perceived—proceeded to acknowledge it by artless eulogies and thanks and by little presents, which all tended to lighten the bonds of this domestic alliance. Madame Cibot set a thousand times as much store on being appreciated at her true value as she did upon being paid; and this sentiment, as everybody knows, invariably makes up for slender wages. Cibot undertook errands, repairs, all that appertained to his department, in connection with the wants of his wife's "two gentlemen," for half price.

To conclude, in the second year after the installation of Pons and Schmucke in the Rue de Normandie a fresh element of friendship was introduced into the alliance between the porter's lodge and the second floor. In the indulgence of his indolence and his desire to shirk the material cares of life, Schmucke made a bargain with Madame Cibot, whereby for fifteen sous a day—that is, forty-five francs per month, she undertook to provide him with breakfast and dinner; whereupon Pons, finding that his friend's breakfast was very satisfactory, followed suit by making an arrangement to pay eighteen francs a month for breakfast. This system of provisioning, which swelled the gross revenues of the lodge to the extent of about ninety francs per month, made the two tenants inviolable beings, angels, cherubim, gods. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether the King of the French—who knows something of the subject—be served so well as were the Pair of Nut-Crackers. The milk they drank came unwatered from the can; they saw the newspapers of the tenants of the first and third floors gratis—for the occupants of those floors rose late, and would have been told, in case of emergency, that their papers had not yet come—and, moreover, Madame Cibot kept the clothes, the rooms, the landing outside the rooms, in short all the belongings and surroundings of the two old men in a state of Flemish neatness. As for Schmucke, *he* was happier than he had ever hoped to be; Madame Cibot made life easy to him: he gave her six francs a month to look to the washing and mending of his linen, and fifteen francs a month he spent upon tobacco. These three items of expenditure reached a monthly total of sixty-six francs; which multiplied by twelve makes seven hundred and ninety-two francs; add two hundred and twenty francs for rent and taxes, and you have a total of one thousand and twelve francs. Schmucke's clothes were made by Cibot, and the mean cost of these necessaries was a hundred and fifty francs; so that this profound philosopher lived upon twelve hundred francs a year. How many persons in Europe, whose one idea is to go and live at Paris, will be agreeably surprised to learn that it is possible to live there in comfort on an income of twelve hundred francs in the Rue de Normandie in the Marais under the wing of a Madame Cibot!

When Madame Cibot saw old Pons returning home at five in the evening she was utterly astounded. Not only was the thing itself unprecedented, but "her gentleman" passed her without saluting her.

"Well, Cibot!" said she to her husband, "Monsieur Pons must either have come in for a million or gone mad!"

"It certainly looks like it," replied Cibot, dropping a coatsleeve in which he was inserting what in tailors' slang is called a *poniard*.

VII.

A LIVING COPY OF THE FABLE OF THE TWO PIGEONS.

At the very moment when Pons had terminated his automatic journey homeward, Madame Cibot was putting the finishing touch to Schmucke's dinner, which consisted of a certain *ragoût* whose savor pervaded the entire court. The dish consisted of pieces of boiled beef bought at a cook-shop—which did a little in the regrating line—and fricasseed with butter and finely chopped onions until the meat and onions had entirely absorbed the butter, so as to give this porter's dainty the appearance of a fry. This dish concocted *con amore* by Madame Cibot for her husband and Schmucke, between whom she divided it, sufficed, when flanked by a bottle of beer and a morsel of cheese, for the wants of the old German music-master; and rest assured that not even King Solomon himself in all his glory dined any better than Schmucke did. This dish of beef fricasseed with onions; fragments of chicken in *ragoût;* at one time some cold meat dressed with vinegar and parsley and a bit of fish served up with a sauce of Madame Cibot's own invention—a sauce so piquant that with it a mother might have eaten her own baby quite unsuspectingly—at another a slice or two of venison; such according to the quantity and quality of the provisions re-sold by the restaurants on the boulevard to the cook-shop in the Rue Boucherat; such was the usual fare of Schmucke; who accepted without a murmur whatever "goot Montame Zipod" provided for him. And good Madame Cibot had, day by day, curtailed the bill of fare until she had brought it within the purchasing power of twenty sous.

"I'll go and find n'out what'n has happened to him, poor dear man," quoth Madame Cibot to her spouse, "for here's Monsieur Schmucke's dinner quite ready."

Thereupon Madame Cibot covered the deep earthenware dish with a plate of common china, and, in spite of her age, contrived to reach the apartments of the two friends just as Schmucke was opening the door for Pons.

"Vat is de matter wit you, mein goot friend?" said the German, startled at the total alteration in Pons's countenance.

"I will tell you all; but first I am going to dine with you."

"To tine! To tine!" exclaimed the enraptured Schmucke. "But no; dat is imbossible," added he, as the thought of his friend's gastrolatry occurred to him.

At this juncture the old German caught sight of Madame Cibot (who, in the exercise of her rights as lawful [house] wife, was listening to the conversation), and one of those bright ideas, which flash into the mind of genuine friendship only, occurred to him. Darting to the door, he dragged her out on to the landing, and said to her:

"Montame Zipod, dis goot Bons lofs goot tings; go to de Gatran-Bleu; order ein nice little tinner; anjovies, maggaroni—ein feast fit for Lugullus!"

"What may that be?" inquired Madame Cibot.

"Why! Feal *à la pourcheoise,*" replied Schmucke, "ein goot feesh, ein bottle of glaret, all de best tings dat dey have: some grogettes of rise, and some smoked bagon! Bay for it; but say not one wort, I will rebay you to-morrow morning."

When Schmucke returned to the room his face wore a joyous expression, and he was rubbing his hands: but as he listened to the recital of the unlooked-for troubles that had just swept down upon the heart of his friend, the features of the old German gradually resumed an expression of amazement. He tried to console Pons by painting the world from a Schmuckean point of view; Paris was simply a perpetual whirlwind; Parisians, both men and women, were borne along in a waltz of furious rapidity; one ought to be quite independent of the world, which regards outward appearances only, and cares nothing for "de inner man," said Schmucke. Then he proceeded to relate for the hundredth time how the only three pupils whom he had ever loved, and who had a

tender regard for him—young ladies for whom he would lay down his life, and who were even so good as to allow him a small yearly pension of nine hundred francs, to which each contributed her share of about three hundred francs—had entirely forgotten to come and see him, and had not been able to receive him when he called upon them any time during the last three years: it is true that Schmucke used to call upon these ladies of fashion *at ten o'clock in the morning*: and, moreover, that the quarterly installments of his allowance were paid into the hands of notaries.

"And yet," pursued Schmucke, "dey have hearts of gold; in fact dey are my leetle Saint Cecilias, jarming ladies, Montame de Bordentuère, Montame de Fentenesse, and Montame di Tillet. When I see dem it is in de Jambs-Elysees, and dey do not see me; but dey do lofe me vell, and I could go and tine wit dem; dey would be ferry glat; I gould go to deir gountry seats; but I moche prefer to be wit my friend Bons, begause I gan see him whenever I like, and effery tay."

Pons seized the hand of Schmucke, and, placing it between his own hands, gave it a squeeze which was intended to convey all the feelings that he could not express in words; and for several minutes the two friends remained thus hand in hand, like two lovers meeting after a protracted separation.

"Tine here effery tay!" resumed Schmucke, who was silently invoking a blessing on the cruelty of Madame Camusot. "Gome now! we will pric-à-prac togedder; and de tevil will neffer put his tail into our home."

In order that the reader may understand the full heroism of the words—"we will pric-à-prac togedder"—he should be informed that Schmucke's ignorance of bric-à-brac-ology was crass. It was only the strength of his friendship that had preserved him from breaking some of the objects contained in the salon and closet that had been given up to Pons as a museum. Schmucke—whose whole mind was devoted to music, who composed music for his own sake—looked upon all the little knickknacks of his friend much as a fish (supposing that a fish could receive a card of invitation) might look upon a flower-show at the Luxembourg. He respected these wonderful works, simply because Pons showed so much respect for them when he was dusting his treasures; and Schmucke would respond to the ecstasies of his friend with a—"Yes, it is ferry pretty"—just as a mother replies, with fond unmeaning phrases, to the gestures of a child that is too young to talk. Since the two friends had lived together, Pons had bartered his time-piece for another, to Schmucke's knowledge, no fewer than seven times; and on each occasion had gained by the exchange. Pons now possessed a magnificent time-piece by Boule, an ebony time-piece inlaid with copper and carved, a time-piece in Boule's first manner; (for Boule had two manners, just as Raphael had three: in his first manner Boule married copper to ebony; in his second, against his own conviction, he devoted himself to tortoise-shell, and accomplished marvels, in endeavoring to outdo his competitors, the inventors of tortoise-shell marquetry). But Schmucke, in spite of Pons's learned dissertations, did not perceive the slightest difference between the magnificent time-piece in Boule's first manner, and its six predecessors. Still, seeing how much pleasure Pons derived from these *baubles*, as Schmucke termed them, Schmucke took more care of them than Pons himself did.

We need not, then, be astonished that Schmucke's heroic exclamation should have had power to subdue the despair of Pons; the old German's—"We will pric-à-prac togedder"—meant: "I will spend money on bric-à-brac if you will dine at home, with me."

"Dinner is on the table, gentlemen," said Madame Cibot, entering the room and making the announcement with wonderful aplomb.

Pons's surprise, when he saw and tasted the dinner provided for him through Schmucke's friendly care, may be readily imagined. But the feelings which Pons now experienced—feelings that arise but

rarely in a lifetime—are never called forth by that calm unvarying devotion whereby one friend perpetually intimates to another—"In me, you have a second self;" —for to *that* one grows accustomed. No; such feelings as these owe their origin to the contrast between such proofs as Pons was now receiving of the happiness of home life, and the brutalities that we meet with in society. It is the world, it is the world that incessantly renews the ties which bind lover to lover and friend to friend—when noble heart is wedded to noble heart by love or friendship.

Even thus it was with Pons and Schmucke, both of whom were affected even to tears. Not a word passed between them; but they loved each other more than ever, and, from time to time, exchanged a friendly little nod, which acted like a healing balm poured into the wounds inflicted by Madame Camusot's "pebble," on the heart of Pons. Schmucke, meanwhile, was rubbing his hands with such violence as seriously to endanger the skin; he had hit upon one of those inventions which surprise a German only when it has been suddenly hatched in a brain congealed by the respect due to the sovereign princes of the Fatherland.

"Mein goot Bons!"—began Schmucke.

"I know what you are going to say; you wish us to dine together every day."

"I wish dat I were rich enough to giff you soche a dinner, effery day," replied the worthy German in a melancholy tone.

Madame Cibot, to whom Pons occasionally gave an order for the boulevard theaters, and thus raised himself, in her affections, to a level with her boarder Schmucke, now interposed with the following suggestion:

"Asking parding, gentlemen," said she, "for three francs, I can provide a dinner for two—without wine—every day; a dinner fit to make you lick your plates as clean as if they had been washed."

"De fact is," replied Schmucke, "dat on de tings dat Madame Zipod gooks for me, I tine petter dan de folks who eat de king's fictuals."

Animated by his hopes, the habitually respectful German went so far as to imitate the irreverence of the minor journals by ridiculing the fixed tariff of the royal table.

"Indeed?" said Pons. "Well, I will try the experiment to-morrow."

When Schmucke heard this promise he sprang from one end of the table to the other, dragging with him tablecloth, dishes and bottles, and clasped Pons in an embrace the intensity of which can be compared only to the eager combination of one gas with another, for which it has a chemical affinity.

"What happiness!" cried Schmucke; while Madame Cibot, who also was touched, proudly remarked:

"Then it is settled that monsieur will dine here every day!"

Unconscious of the event to which she was indebted for the realization of her dream, the worthy matron went down to her lodge, and entered it with an air worthy of Josepha herself, when she first appears upon the scene, in the opera of "William Tell." Dashing down the plates and dishes, Dame Cibot called out to her husband:

"Cibot, go and fetch two small cups of coffee from the Café Turc! And tell the waiter who serves it that they are for me!"

Then sitting down, and placing her hands upon her powerful knees, Madame Cibot glanced through the window, at the wall that faced the house, and exclaimed:

"I will go this very evening and consult Madame Fontaine!" Madame Fontaine was fortune-teller to all the cooks, ladies'-maids, footmen, porters, etc., etc., in the Marais—"Since these two gentlemen came here, we have put two thousand francs into the savings bank; in eight years! What luck! Now, must I give Monsieur Pons full value for his money, and so attach him to his home? Mistress Fontaine's hen will tell me that."

Not having seen any relatives call upon Pons or Schmucke during the course of nearly three years, Madame Cibot cherished the hope that she would be remembered in the wills of "her gentlemen;"

and actuated by this avaricious thought —a tardy growth among her mustaches of hitherto untainted probity—she had served the old men with redoubled zeal. By going out to dine, Pons had, up to this date, avoided that complete subjection in which the portress desired to hold "her gentlemen." The nomad existence led by the old troubadour-collector, had put to flight the vague ideas of captivation which had flitted through the brain of Madame Cibot; but, from the date of this memorable dinner, they developed into a formidable scheme.

After the lapse of a quarter of an hour, Madame Cibot re-appeared in the dining-room, armed with two cups of excellent coffee, flanked by two liqueur-glasses of kirschenwasser.

"Long liff Montame Zipod!" cried Schmucke; "she guessed what I wanted."

After the parasite had indulged in sundry Jeremiads, which Schmucke combated, by just such coaxing phrases as the home-keeping pigeon must have addressed to the pigeon who went abroad, the two friends sallied forth together. Schmucke did not like to leave his friend alone, in the state to which he had been reduced, by the conduct of the Camusot household (masters and servants). He knew Pons's disposition well, and felt that, seated in the orchestra, on his conductor's stool, he might be assailed by reflections of the most gloomy description, which would destroy the good effect of his return to the nest. As Schmucke accompanied Pons home, at about twelve o'clock at night, he passed his arm through that of Pons, and, treating him as a lover treats the mistress whom he idolizes, pointed out to him where the pavement ended and where it recommenced, and warned him when they came to a gutter. Schmucke could have wished that the streets were paved with down, that the sky were blue, that the angels would fill the ears of Pons with the music which they played to *him;* for he had conquered, in the heart of Pons, the last, the only province that was not already *his!*

During three months nearly, Pons dined with Schmucke every day. But, in the first place, this alteration in his mode of life compelled him to curtail his expenditure on bric-à-brac, by about eighty francs per month (for, in addition to the forty-five francs which he paid for his dinner, his wine cost him five-and-thirty francs); and, in the second place, spite of the attentions and German witticisms of Schmucke, the old artist missed the dainty dishes, the liqueurs, the excellent coffee, the chit-chat, the artificial politeness, the society and the scandal of the houses in which he formerly dined. We cannot, in the decline of life, shake off a habit of thirty-six years' standing. 'Tis but an ungenerous fluid that a hogshead of wine, at a hundred and thirty francs the hogshead, pours into the cup of an epicure; so that every time Pons carried his glass to his lips, he recalled, with a thousand keen regrets, the choice vintages of his Amphitryons. And lastly, at the expiration of three months, the cruel pangs, which had wellnigh broken Pons's sensitive heart, were deadened; he had forgotten all but the attractions of society, just as an aged lover mourns for the flagrantly unfaithful mistress whom he has been compelled to abandon!

Although Pons did his best to conceal the profound melancholy to which he was a prey, it was sufficiently obvious that the old musician was the victim of one of those inexplicable maladies, whose seat is in the mind. In order to throw some light upon this species of nostalgia, arising from the rupture of a habit, suffice it to point out one of those thousand trifles which enmesh the mind in an unyielding net-work, just as a coat of mail incases the body in steel:

One of the keenest delights, then, of Pons's former life—a delight that is common to all diners-out—was the *surprise,* the impression made upon the palate by the extraordinary dish, the dainty with which, in *bourgeois* circles, the mistress of the house crowns the repast when she wants to give the dinner a festive air. The stomach-seated joy was now lost to Pons; for Madame Cibot piqued herself upon presenting him with a verbal bill

of fare. Thus the periodic stimulus of Pons's life was wholly gone; his dinner proceeded without that element of surprise, which formerly, in the houses of our forefathers, was known as "the covered dish!" Now all this was quite unintelligible to Schmucke: Pons's delicacy of feeling deterred him from complaining; and, if there be anything in the world more melancholy than neglected genius, 'tis a stomach that is not understood! Unrequited love—that threadbare catastrophe—is based upon an artificial want; for if we are forsaken by the creature, we can love the Creator: He has treasures in abundance to dispense. But the stomach!—no, there is nothing that can be compared to the sufferings of the stomach; for, before all things—Life! Pons mourned over the loss of certain creams—genuine poems; certain white sauces—masterpieces of art; certain truffled fowls—sweet as love's young dream; and, above all, those celebrated carps of Rhine which are to be had only in Paris, and oh! with what condiments! At intervals, when his thoughts reverted to Count Popinot's cook, he would ejaculate—"Oh, Sophie!" The casual passenger who overheard this sigh would have supposed that the worthy man was thinking of his mistress; but he was thinking of something far more rare—a well-fed carp! a plump carp served up with a certain sauce, thin in the tureen, thick upon the tongue—a sauce that merited the *Prix Montyon*. Brooding over the memory of these dinners of other days, the old musician—victim of the homesickness of the stomach—lost a good deal of flesh.

Toward the end of January, 1845, that is to say, at the beginning of the fourth month of Pons's probation, the young flutist, who, like the vast majority of Germans, was christened Wilhelm, and—to distinguish him from all the Wilhelms, though it by no means distinguished him from all the Schwabs—was surnamed Schwab, deemed it necessary to enlighten Schmucke as to the condition of the leader of the orchestra, which was attracting a good deal of attention at the theater. On the occasion, therefore, of a certain first representation, when the old German was necessarily present, Wilhelm Schwab said to him, pointing to old Pons, who was gloomily taking his place at his desk: "Poor old Pons is breaking; there is something wrong with him; his eye is dull, and the movements of his arm are feebler than they used to be."

"It is always so, when beoble are sigsty," replied Schmucke.

Like that mother of whom we read in "The Chronicles of the Canongate," whose desire to have her son with her for twenty-four hours longer leads to his being shot, Schmucke was capable of sacrificing Pons to the pleasure of seeing him at dinner every day.

"Every one belonging to the theater is uneasy; and, as our first *danseuse*, Mademoiselle Heloise Brisetout, remarks, he doesn't make any noise when he blows his nose, now."

Formerly, when the old musician blew his nose, he seemed to be playing on the horn; so loud was the sound which he drew from his long and deep proboscis beneath the handkerchief; in fact, one of the most common grounds of complaint against Cousin Pons, on the part of Madame Camusot, was this very noise.

"I woot giff almost anyting to zave him; he finds life wearisome," said Schmucke.

"Upon my word," said Wilhelm Schwab, "Monsieur Pons seems, to me, to be so superior to us poor devils, that I did not dare to invite him to my wedding: I am going to be married."

"Married! How? In what way?" inquired Schmucke.

"Oh! in all loyalty and honor," replied Wilhelm Schwab, who fancied that Schmucke's question covered a joke—a joke of which that perfect Christian was utterly incapable.

"Now, gentlemen, to your places," said Pons, glancing at his little army in the orchestra, when he heard the tinkle of the manager's bell.

Thereupon the band struck up the overture to "La Fiancée du Diable," a fairy piece that had a run of a couple of hundred nights. At the first *entr'acte* Wilhelm and Schmucke found themselves alone to

gether in the deserted orchestra. The atmosphere of the house registered 32° Reaumur.

"Will you dell me your story?" said Schmucke to Wilhelm.

"Look; do you see that young man in the stage-box there? Do you recognize him?"

"Not in de least."

"Ah! because he has a pair of yellow gloves on, and is surrounded with the halo of affluence; but for all that, it is my friend Fritz Brunner, of Frankfort-on-Main."

"What! de berson who used to gome into de orghestra and sit bezide you to see de play?"

"The very same. Isn't such a metamorphosis quite incredible?"

The hero of the promised story was one of those Germans in whose faces you can trace the somber sarcasm of Goethe's Mephistopheles and the jolly good-fellowship of the romances of Auguste Lafontaine, of pacific memory; cunning and simplicity; the keen commercial spirit and the studied recklessness of a member of the Jockey club; but, above all, that distaste for life that puts a pistol into the hand of Werther, weary of Charlotte—much more weary of the German princes. Fritz Brunner's face, in truth, was typical of Germany; it was a medley of Israelitish guile and of simplicity, of stupidity and courage, of that knowledge which begets disgust, and that experience which stands disarmed before the merest puerility. An excessive use of beer and of tobacco had left their traces on the features; and then — to heighten all these antitheses—there was a diabolical sparkle in the fine but faded azure eyes. While dressed with all the elegance of the banker, Fritz Brunner was conspicuously bald. The scanty locks that penury and dissipation had spared clustered in bright red curls on each side of his head; so that when the days of his financial restoration dawned, he still retained the privilege of paying the barber. His face, once fresh and handsome, had now contracted a certain harshness of tone which, heightened by a red mustache and tawny beard, gave to the features an almost sinister aspect. In Brunner's strife with sorrow, his pure blue eyes—those eyes in which an enraptured mother had once beheld a divine replica of her own—had lost their pristine clearness. Now this premature philosopher, this young old man, was the work of a step-mother.

Here begins the curious history of a prodigal son of Frankfort-on-Main, the strangest and the most extraordinary phenomenon that ever presented itself in that sage, though central, city.

VIII.

PRODIGAL SONS, WHEN THEY HAIL FROM FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN, END BY BECOMING BANKERS AND MILLIONAIRES.

Mr. Gideon Brunner, the father of our Fritz, was one of those celebrated innkeepers of Frankfort-on-Main, who conspire with the bankers to bleed, according to law, the purse of the traveler. This worthy Calvinist had married a converted Jewess, and owed the elements of his fortune to her marriage portion. When her boy Fritz was twelve years old, the Jewess died, leaving him to the guardianship of his father, and the supervision of his uncle, a furrier at Leipsic, and head partner in the firm of Virlaz & Co. This uncle, who was by no means so pliable as his furs, insisted on Brunner senior placing young Fritz's fortune — which consisted of a pile of marcs banco—in the house of Al-Sartchild, and there leaving it.

By way of revenging himself for this Israelitish exigence, Brunner senior married again, under the pretext that it was impossible for him to manage his vast hotel without the helping hand and eye of a woman. His second wife, the daughter of another innkeeper, he took to be a pearl; little did he know the nature of an only daughter, the idol of her father and her mother. The second Mrs. Brunner was what all young German women are, when they happen to

be frivolous and malicious. She dissipated her fortune, and avenged the first Mrs. Brunner, by making her husband's home the most miserable of all homes within the territory of the free city of Frankfort-on-Main, whose millionaires ('tis said) are going to pass a municipal law to compel the women to devote their attentions exclusively to home and family.

This German lady loved the various kinds of vinegar, to which the Germans apply the general term Rhine wine. She loved Parisian knickknacks for the toilet, and had a passion for riding and for dress. In fact, the only costly things she did not love were—women.

She contracted an aversion for little Fritz, and would have driven him mad, if that young product of Calvinism and Judaism had not had Frankfort for his birthplace, and the house of Virlaz, of Leipsic, as his guardian; but Uncle Virlaz, being entirely wrapped up in his furs, confined his vigilance to the marcs banco; and left the child to the tender mercies of its step-mother.

This hyena was all the more infuriated against the cherub-child of the beautiful Madame Brunner, inasmuch as she herself remained childless. Actuated by a diabolical motive, this criminal German woman launched young Fritz, so soon as he had attained his majority, into the most anti-Germanic dissipations; her hope being that English horses, Rhine vinegar, and Goethe's "Margarets" would deal the finishing blow to the child of the Jewess *and* his fortune; for Uncle Virlaz had left a fine inheritance for his little Fritz as soon as he should become of age. But if the gaming-tables of the German Waters and the friends of Fritz's German Wines—among which friends we must include Wilhelm Schwab—managed to knock down the Virlaz capital, the youthful prodigal survived, to serve—in accordance with the will of the Lord—as an awful warning to youths in the city of Frankfort-on-Main; where every family used his name as a scarecrow, to confine its children, prudent and alarmed, within the limits of its iron strong-room, lined with marcs banco. Instead of dying in the prime of life, Fritz Brunner had the pleasure of seeing his step-mother interred in one of those charming cemeteries, in which the Germans, under the pretense of showing respect to their departed friends, abandon themselves to their unbridled passion for horticulture.

The second Mrs. Brunner having predeceased her parents, Brunner senior had absolutely nothing to show for all the money that she had extracted from his strong-box, and all the troubles she had caused him—troubles so heavy, that this innkeeper with the constitution of a Hercules, was, at the age of sixty-seven, as emaciated as if he had been attacked by the famous poison of the Borgias.

To miss his wife's fortune after enduring his wife for ten years, turned this innkeeper into a second ruin of Heidelberg, a ruin which underwent ('tis true) continual repairs from the *rechnungs* of the guests; just as the ruins of Heidelberg are repaired, with a view to *keeping up* the enthusiasm of the tourists, who come in troops to see these ruins that are so well *kept up*.

The old man's condition was as much talked about at Frankfort as a bankruptcy would have been. People would point at Brunner and say, "See to what a state a bad wife, whose fortune one does not come in for, and a son educated in the French style, may reduce a man."

In Italy and Germany every misfortune that happens is imputed to the French; they are the target for every bullet; "but the God pursuing his career" (etc., etc., as in the ode of Lefranc de Pompignan).

The effects of the anger of the landlord of the Grand Hotel of Holland did not exhaust themselves upon the tourists, whose bills (*rechnungs*) bore the imprint of his grievances. When his son was completely ruined, Gideon, regarding him as the indirect cause of all his father's misfortunes, refused him bread and water, salt, fire, house-room, and—the pipe! (the refusal of which, by a father, who is an innkeeper *and* a German, is the *ne plus ultra* of paternal malediction).

The authorities of the district, not taking into consideration the original shortcomings of the father, and looking upon him as one of the most unfortunate of men in Frankfort-on-Main, espoused his cause, expelled Fritz from the territory of that free city, and declared against him, a German feud.

The law is neither more humane, nor wiser, at Frankfort, than it is elsewhere —although that city is the seat of the Germanic Diet. How seldom does a judge ascend the stream of crime and misery, in order to discover who held the urn whence the first trickling tributary flowed! If Brunner forgot his son, his son's friends followed the example of Brunner. Whence sprung this German with the deeply tragic face who had landed in elegant Paris amid all the bustle of a first representation, and was there, in a stage-box alone? Such was the question which the journalists, the lions, and sundry Parisian ladies among the audience, were putting to themselves. Ah! if the story that has just been told could have been acted in front of the prompter's box, for the benefit of that assembly, it would have made a far finer drama than the fairy piece, "La Fiancée du Diable"; although it would have been (not the first but) the two hundred thousandth representation of the sublime parable that was acted in Mesopotamia, three thousand years before the birth of Christ.

When Fritz was expelled from Frankfort, he went on foot to Strasbourg, and there encountered something that the prodigal son of Scripture did not encounter in the land of Holy Writ; something that reveals the superiority of Alsace, prolific in generous hearts, to prove to Germany the beauty of the combination of French wit and German solidity. Wilhelm Schwab, who had just succeeded to the fortune of his father and mother, now master of a hundred thousand francs, received Fritz with open arms, open heart, open house, and open purse. To attempt to describe the sensations of Fritz at the moment when, dusty, miserable, quasi-leprous as he was, he found, on the other bank of the Rhine, a real, substantial twenty-franc piece in the hand of a genuine friend, would be to undertake an ode such as Pindar only could launch into the world—in Greek—to fan the embers of expiring friendship. Add the names of Fritz and Wilhelm to those of Damon and Pythias, of Castor and Pollux, of Pylades and Orestes, of Dubreuil and Pmeja, of Schmucke and Pons, and to all the fancy names we give to the two friends of the Monomotapa (for La Fontaine, like a man of genius, as he was, has placed before us semblances of men without substance and without reality). You may add these two new names to our roll of celebrities, with all the more propriety, in that Wilhelm devoured his heritage in company with Fritz, just as Fritz had drunk his in company with Wilhelm—smoking at the same time (be it always understood) every species of tobacco that is grown.

Improbable as it may seem, the two friends consumed this heritage in the breweries of Strasbourg, after the most foolish and most vulgar fashion possible —in the society of the ballet-girls of the Strasbourg Theater, and of certain Alsatian damsels, who had worn their little brooms to the very stump.

At the same time, not a morning dawned but they would say to each other: "This may be all very well; but we must pull up, come to some resolution, and do something with the money that is left." "Oh! just this *one* day," Fritz would remark, "but to-morrow." "Oh, yes, to-morrow!"

In the life of the debauchee, *To-day* is a tremendous coxcomb; *To-morrow* is a great coward, scared by the courage of his predecessor; *To-day* is the swashbuckler of the old comedy; *To-morrow* is the phantom of our existing pantomimes. When the two friends had come to their last thousand-franc note they booked places at the Messageries which are called royal, and so reached Paris, where they found quarters at the Hotel du Rhin in the Rue du Mail, which was kept by one Graff, formerly head-waiter to Gideon Brunner. On the strength of Graff's recommendation, Keller Brothers

engaged Fritz as one of their clerks, at a salary of six hundred francs a year.

Now Graff, the landlord of the Hotel du Rhin, is a brother of Graff, the celebrated tailor. The tailor took Wilhelm into his service as bookkeeper. Graff, the hotel-keeper, deemed these two posts not nearly good enough for the two prodigal sons, when he called to mind his own apprenticeship at the Hotel du Hollande.

These two facts—the recognition of a poor friend by a rich one, and the interest taken by a German innkeeper in a fellow-countryman without a farthing, may lead some persons to suppose that this history is a romance; but, in these days truth is all the more like fiction, in that fiction takes such incredible pains to resemble truth.

Fritz, clerk at a salary of six hundred francs, and Wilhelm, bookkeeper at the same remuneration, found it very difficult to exist in a city so seductive as Paris; so, in 1837, after they had been in Paris two years, Wilhelm, who had great talent as a flutist, and was desirous of sometimes having a little butter on his bread, joined the orchestra over which Pons presided. As for Fritz, *he* could supplement his income only by the exercise of that financial capacity with which, as a scion of the Virlaz stem, he was endowed. In spite of his application—perhaps on account of his talents—it was not till 1843 that the Frankfortian succeeded in getting two thousand francs a year. Penury, that divine step-mother, did for these two young men what their own mothers had been unable to do for them; she taught them economy, knowledge of the world, knowledge of life; she gave them that grand, that potent education of chastisement, which she imparts to all men destined to be great; all of whom are unhappy in their youth.

Fritz and Wilhelm, being but ordinary men, did not lay to heart all the lessons of Penury; they did their best to keep out of the way of her blows; they found her bosom flinty and her arms lean, nor could they extract from those arms the good fairy Urgela who yields to the caresses of men of genius. But they *did* learn the full value of Fortune, and resolved to clip her wings, if ever she returned to their door.

"Well! Father Schmucke, I can explain the whole matter in one word," pursued William (who had told the whole of this story to the pianist, in German). "Brunner senior is dead. He was, unavowedly to his son and to Monsieur Graff (with whom we lodge), one of the original promoters of the Baden railways, out of which he made immense profits. He leaves a fortune of £160,000. This is the last night that I shall play the flute. But for its being a first night I should have left some days ago, but I did not wish my part in the music to be wanting."

"Dat is right, young man," said Schmucke. "But whom are you going to marry?"

"The daughter of Monsieur Graff, our host, the landlord of the Hotel du Rhin. I have loved Mademoiselle Emilie these seven years; she has read so many immoral novels that she has refused every offer for my sake, without knowing what might be the upshot. The young lady will be very rich, for she is sole heiress of the Graffs, who are tailors, in the Rue de Richelieu. Fritz is going to give me five times what we squandered together at Strasbourg — five hundred thousand francs! A million francs he devotes to the establishment of a bank, to which Monsieur Graff, the tailor, contributes five hundred thousand francs; the father of my future wife permits me to invest her portion (which amounts to two hundred and fifty thousand francs) in the same establishment, and will invest an equal sum on his own account. Thus the house of Brunner, Schwab & Co. will have a capital of two million five hundred thousand francs. Fritz has just bought shares in the Bank of France to the amount of fifteen hundred thousand francs, to guarantee our account there. But that is not the whole of Fritz's fortune; there are, besides, some houses at Frankfort, which belonged to his father, and are reckoned to be worth a million francs. He has

already let the Grand Hotel du Hollande to a cousin of the Graffs."

"You look very sadly at your friend," replied Schmucke, who had listened to Wilhelm attentively; "are you envious of him?"

"I am not *envious;* but I am jealous for Fritz's happiness," said Wilhelm. "Is *that* the face of a man who is happy? I dread Paris on his account. I wish he would do as I am doing. The old Adam may awake in him again. Of our two heads, 'tis not his that has acquired the greater share of ballast. That toilet, that eyeglass, all that sort of thing, makes me uneasy; he has looked at nothing in the theater, except the *lorettes.* Ah! if you only knew how difficult it is to persuade Fritz to marry! He has a horror of that which in France is termed '*faire la cour.*' We shall have to launch him into married life, as—in England—they launch a man into eternity, that is to say—with a halter round his neck."

Amid the tumult that marks the conclusion of a first representation "the flute" gave the invitation to his conductor, and Pons accepted it with glee. For the first time in three months, Schmucke saw a smile on the face of his friend. He conducted Pons back to the Rue de Normandie in silence; for by that gleam of joy he recognized the intensity of the malady from which his friend was suffering. That a man so truly noble, so disinterested as Pons, a man of such elevated sentiments, should have such weaknesses was an inexplicable puzzle to the stoical Schmucke; terribly sad he grew, for he felt that—in the interests of Pons's happiness — he ought to renounce the pleasure of seeing his "*goot Bons*" sitting opposite to him at the dinner-table every day; and Schmucke did not know whether he could bear to make so great a sacrifice. This notion drove him mad.

The proud silence maintained by Pons, stationed on the Mount Aventine of the Rue de Normandie, had, necessarily, attracted the notice of Madame Camusot; but once freed from her parasite, she troubled herself but little about him. She, in common with her "charming daughter," fancied that her cousin had fathomed the trick of *her little Lili;* but with the president things were very different.

President Camusot de Marville, a short, stout little man who, since his promotion, had grown solemn, was an admirer of Cicero, and preferred the Opera Comique to the Italian Opera; compared actor with actor; followed in the footsteps of the ruck; repeated, as his own, all the articles in the ministerial journal; and, in giving his decisions, paraphrased the ideas of the councilor who preceded him. This magistrate, the leading features of whose character were sufficiently well known, and who was forced by his position to take a serious view of every subject, had a particular regard for family ties. Like most husbands who are entirely governed by their wives, the president affected, in minor matters, an independence which his wife did not infringe.

During a whole month he was contented with the commonplace reasons assigned by his wife for Pons's disappearance; but at length he began to think it strange that the old musician—a friend of forty years' standing—had discontinued his visits, immediately after making so considerable a present as the fan of Madame de Pompadour. At the Tuileries, where this fan, which Count Popinot had recognized as a masterpiece, was handed round, it had procured for Madame Camusot sundry compliments extremely gratifying to her vanity. The beauties of its ten ivory branches, each of which was carved with inimitable delicacy, were pointed out to her in detail. At Count Popinot's a certain Russian lady—the Russians always fancy themselves in Russia—offered Madame Camusot six thousand francs for this extraordinary fan; she was amused at seeing it in such hands, for it was undoubtedly fit for a duchess.

"One cannot deny our poor cousin the credit of thoroughly understanding these little bits of trumpery," quoth Cecile to her father the morning after the Russian princess's offer.

"*Little bits of trumpery!*" exclaimed

the president; "why, the State is about to give three hundred thousand francs for the collection of the late Monsieur Conseiller Dusommerard, and to contribute, in conjunction with the city of Paris, half a million of francs toward the purchasing and repairing of the Hotel Cluny, in order to house '*these little bits of trumpery*.'"

"'*These little bits of trumpery,*' my dear child, are often the only traces that remain to us of civilizations that have perished. An Etruscan vase, a necklace (which are worth, one, forty thousand; the other, fifty thousand francs) are '*little bits of trumpery*' that reveal to us the perfection of the arts at the time of the siege of Troy, while proving to us that the Etruscans were Trojans who had taken refuge in Italy."

Such was the style of the stout little president's wit; he assailed his wife and daughter with clumsy irony.

"The combination of acquirements which '*these little bits of trumpery*' demand is a science which is called Archæology. Now, Archæology embraces architecture, sculpture, painting, the art of working in the precious metals, the ceramic art, the art of cabinet-making (quite a modern art), lace, tapestry—in short, every product of human labor."

"Cousin Pons is quite a *savant* then?" said Cecile.

"Ah! by the way, that reminds me; why don't we ever see him now?" inquired the president, with the air of a man under the influence of an emotion, produced by a thousand forgotten impressions, which suddenly coalesce, and—to use a term common among sportsmen—*font balle*.

"Oh! he must be huffed about some trifle or other," replied Madame Camusot. "Perhaps I have not shown myself sufficiently appreciative of the gift of this fan; I am, as you know, very ignorant—"

"You! one of Servin's most accomplished pupils! *You!* not know Watteau!" interrupted the president.

"I know David, Gerard, Gros; and Girodet and Guerin and Monsieur de Forbin and Turpin de Crisse—"

"You ought to have—"

"What *ought* I to have done, monsieur?" asked the lady, looking at her husband with a Queen of Sheba air.

"Known what Watteau is, my dear; he is very much the fashion," resumed the president, with a humility which showed how great were his obligations to his wife.

This conversation occurred some days before the first representation of "The Fiancée du Diable," when all the members of the band were struck by Pons's sickly appearance. But, in the interim, those persons who were accustomed to see Pons at their tables, and to employ him as a messenger, had been making inquiries; and there had arisen, in the circle in which the old man's orbit lay, a feeling of uneasiness which was increased by the fact that several persons had seen him at his post in the theater. In spite of the pains taken by Pons to avoid his former acquaintances when he came across them in his walks, he one day found himself face to face with the quondam minister, Count Popinot, at the shop of Monistrol, one of those famous and audacious dealers of the new Boulevard Beaumarchais, whom Pons had once mentioned to Madame Camusot, and whose wily enthusiasm from day to day raises the price of curiosities; which (they say) are becoming so scarce that it is now impossible to find any.

"My dear Pons, why do we never see you now? You have quite forsaken us; and Madame Popinot does not know what to make of your desertion of us."

"There is a certain house, Monsieur le Comte," replied poor Pons—"the house of a relative—in which I have been made to understand that a man of my years is an incumbrance to society. I was never received with any great show of politeness; but, at all events, up to that time I had never been actually insulted. I never asked any one for a farthing," he added, with all an artist's pride. "In return for certain attentions, I frequently made myself useful to those from whom I received them; but it would seem that I was laboring under a delusion; that I

was liable to unlimited tax and toll, in return for the honor which my friends—my relatives—conferred upon me, by admitting me to their tables. Well! I have resigned my office of parasite. I find every day in my own home that which no table could offer me—a genuine friend!"

These words, imbued as they were with all that bitterness which the old artist was still capable of infusing into them by the aid of tone and gesture, made so deep an impression on the peer that he took the worthy musician aside and said to him:

"Come now, my old friend, what has happened to you? Can you not impart to me in confidence what it is that has wounded you? You will allow me to point out to you that at *my* house you have never been treated otherwise than with respect."

"*You* are the only exception that I make," said the worthy man, "and, besides, *you* are a great nobleman, a statesman; the demands on your time and attention would, if need were, have furnished an excuse for everything."

Yielding to the influence of the diplomatic tact acquired by Popinot in the management of men and in the conduct of business, Pons was at length induced to recount the wrongs that he had suffered in the house of the President de Marville; and Popinot so heartily espoused the victim's cause that, on reaching home, he immediately mentioned the matter to Madame Popinot. That worthy and excellent woman expostulated with Madame de Marville the next time that the two ladies met; and the ex-minister, on his part, having made some observations on the subject to the president, a family explanation took place at the house of the Camusots de Marville. Now, although Camusot was not entirely master in his own house, neither his wife nor his daughter could deny the justice of a remonstrance that had so solid a foundation both of *law* and *fact;* so they kissed the rod and blamed the servants. The servants having been summoned and censured, found grace only by making a clean breast of the whole matter; thus proving to the president how entirely justified Cousin Pons was in remaining at home. Under these circumstances the president acted as all men under petticoat-government would have acted; he displayed his dignity as a husband and a judge, by announcing to his servants that they would be dismissed (and thus lose all the advantages that might accrue to them from their long stay in his service) unless, from that time forth, his cousin Pons and all who did him (the president) the honor to visit at his house, were treated as he himself was treated, *as he himself was treated*—an expression that drew a smile from Madeleine.

"Indeed, you have but one chance of escape," said the president; "you must disarm my cousin by apologizing to him. Go and tell him that your remaining here depends entirely on him; for I shall send you all away, unless he forgives you."

IX.

PONS TAKES MADAME LA PRESIDENTE A WORK OF ART A LITTLE MORE PRECIOUS EVEN THAN A FAN.

The next day the president set off betimes to pay a visit to his cousin before the sitting of the court. The appearance of Monsieur le President de Marville, heralded by Madame Cibot, was quite an event. Pons, who never, in the whole course of his life, had received the honor of a visit from the president, felt that reparation was at hand.

"My dear cousin," said the president, after the customary compliments had been interchanged, "I have at last discovered the cause of your secession. Your conduct increased—if that be possible—the esteem in which I hold you. Now I will say but one word on this point: my servants are all under notice to quit; my wife and daughter are in despair; they want to see you, and offer you an explanation. I can assure you that throughout the whole of this affair there has been *one* innocent person, and that person is a certain elderly judge you wot of; don't punish *me* then for the es-

capade of a giddy little girl who wanted to dine with the Popinots; especially seeing that I am come to sue for peace, with an acknowledgment that we — and we alone—are in the wrong. After all, a friendship of thirty-six years' standing —even supposing that it has received a shock—is not without its rights. Come now, sign the treaty of peace by dining with us this evening."

Hereupon Pons contrived to get entangled in a diffuse reply, and wound up by announcing that he was engaged to be present that evening at the troth-party of one of the performers in his orchestra, who was flinging his flute to limbo in order to become a banker.

"Well, then, to-morrow."

"My cousin, Madame la Comtesse Popinot has sent me an invitation for to-morrow, couched in the most flattering terms—"

"Then the day after to-morrow," persisted the president.

"The day after to-morrow, my first flute's partner—a German—a Monsieur Brunner—returns the betrothed the civility that he received from them to-day."

"Your amiability affords an ample explanation of the zeal with which people compete for the pleasure of your company," said the president. Then, after a moment's pause, he added: "Well, then, let it be next Sunday, se'nnight, as we say at the palace."

"Why, on that day we are going to dine with a Monsieur Graff, the father-in-law of the flutist—"

"Well, be it Saturday then; between that time and this you will find time to reassure a little girl, who has already been crying over her fault. All that even God demands is penitence; will you be more exacting with poor little Cecile than the Omnipotent Himself?"

Pons, thus assailed at his weakest points, took refuge in phrases that were more than polite, and escorted the president to the head of the stairs. An hour later the president's servants found their way in a body to Pons's lodgings. As the manner of servants is, they cringed, they cajoled, they even cried! As for Madeleine, she led Monsieur Pons aside, and throwing herself resolutely at his feet: "'Twas I, monsieur," said she, "'twas I who did it all; and monsieur knows full well that I love him," she added, bursting into a flood of tears. "It is to the revengeful feelings boiling within me that monsieur must attribute all this unhappy business. We shall lose *our annuities!*—monsieur, I was mad, and I should not like my fellow-servants to suffer for my madness. I see now quite plainly that fate did not intend me for monsieur's wife. I have argued the matter with myself; I own I have looked too high, but, monsieur, I love you still. For ten years my one dream of happiness has been to make you happy, and to look after all that you have here! Oh, if monsieur only knew how much I love him! but he must have read it in all my acts of malice: if I were to die to-morrow—what would they find? A will, monsieur, in your favor; yes, monsieur, a will in your favor—in my trunk, under my jewels!"

By touching this chord Madeleine awakened in the bosom of the old bachelor that feeling of gratified vanity to which the fact of having inspired a passion, even in a person who is distasteful to us, will always give rise. Having generously forgiven Madeleine, Pons extended his forgiveness to all the other servants, and told them that he would speak to his cousin Madame Camusot, in order to save them from being sent away. Thus then, to his ineffable delight, Pons found himself restored to all his habitual enjoyments, without having stooped to any act of meanness: instead of his going to the world, the world had come to him; his character, therefore, would gain, instead of losing, dignity. But when he came to explain his triumph to his friend Schmucke, Pons had the mortification of seeing him look sad and full of unuttered doubts. Nevertheless, at sight of the sudden change that had taken place in Pons's countenance, the worthy German acquiesced in the immolation of the pleasure which he had derived from having his friend all to himself for nearly four months.

Moral maladies are in one respect far less terrible than physical—they are instantaneously cured by the gratification of the desire from whose defeat they spring. On this morning Pons became quite a different being; the melancholy moribund old man gave place to the self-contented Pons whom we saw conveying the fan of Madame de Pompadour to Madame de Marville. Schmucke, meanwhile, pondered deeply over this phenomenon, yet failed to comprehend it; for the genuine stoic will never understand the courtesanry of the Frenchman. Now Pons was a genuine Frenchman of the Empire, in whom the gallantry of the eighteenth century was combined with the devotion to the fair sex so highly extolled in the romances "Partant pour la Syrie," etc., etc., etc. Schmucke buried his sorrows in his heart, and covered them with the flowers of German philosophy; but within eight days he turned quite yellow, and Madame Cibot had to resort to strategy in order to introduce the doctor of the district to Schmucke's sick-room. This doctor feared that the old German was suffering from an *icterus*, and left Madame Cibot staggered by that learned word which, being interpreted, simply means *the jaundice*.

And now—for the first time, probably, in the course of their acquaintance—the two friends were about to dine out together; though, so far as Schmucke was concerned, this dinner was merely a trip to Germany. In fact Johann Graff, the landlord of the Hotel du Rhin, and his daughter Emilie, Wolfgang Graff the tailor, and his wife, Fritz Brunner and Wilhem Schwab, were Germans one and all—Pons and the notary being the only French people admitted to the banquet. The tailor and his spouse, who owned a splendid mansion in the Rue de Richelieu between the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs and the Rue Villedo, had undertaken the bringing up of their niece, whose father, not unreasonably, entertained a very strong dislike to his daughter's coming into contact with the heterogeneous crowd that haunts a hostelry. These worthy tailor folks, who loved the child as if she had been their own, gave up the ground-floor of their abode to the young couple. 'Twas in this spot also that the banking-house of Brunner, Schwab & Co. was to have its headquarters. These details had been settled about a month previously; for that was the time required for realizing the fortune of Brunner, the author of all this felicity; and during the interval, the home that was to receive the young couple had been richly redecorated and furnished at the expense of the celebrated tailor. The wing that connected the old mansion between court and garden, with a fine house abutting on the street, had been converted into bank-offices.

As the two friends journeyed from the Rue de Normandie to the Rue Richelieu Pons abstracted from the absent-minded Schmucke the details of this new edition of the story of the prodigal son, for whom Death had killed the fatted—innkeeper. Pons, under the influence of his recent reconciliation with his nearest relatives, was immediately fired with the desire to unite Fritz Brunner and Cecile Camusot in the bonds of wedlock. As chance would have it, the notary of the brothers Graff was no other than the son-in-law and successor of Cardot, formerly second head-clerk in Cardot's office, and a person with whom Pons frequently dined.

"What, is it you, Monsieur Berthier?" said the old musician, holding out his hand to his ex-Amphitryon.

"And pray why have you ceased to do us the honor of dining with us, as you formerly did?" inquired the notary. "My wife was anxious about you. Then we saw you at the first representation of 'The Fiancée du Diable,' and our anxiety was converted into curiosity."

"Old men are sensitive," replied the worthy man. "They have the demerit of being just a century behind the age; but what is to be done? It is quite as much as they can do to represent one epoch; they cannot belong to the epoch in which they die."

"Ah!" said the notary, with a knowing look, "one hare and one century at a time, eh?"

"Oh, by the way, why don't you find a husband for my cousin Cecile de Marville?" asked the worthy man, taking the young notary into a corner of the room.

"Ah, why indeed?" replied the notary. "In this age, when luxury has penetrated even to our porters' lodges, young men pause before uniting their destiny to that of a daughter of a president of the Court Royal of Paris, when that daughter's portion is only a hundred thousand francs. In the class in which the husband of Mademoiselle de Marville must be sought for, you cannot find a woman who costs her husband only three thousand francs a year. The interest on such a portion, then, will barely defray the annual expenses of the lady's toilet. A bachelor with an income of fifteen or twenty thousand francs lives in a pretty entresol; the world does not expect him to make any display; he may do with a single servant; he can devote his whole income to his amusements; the only decorum he need study, he can buy—at his tailor's. Caressed by all far-seeing mothers, he is one of the kings of fashionable Paris.

"A wife, on the other hand, needs an establishment; she monopolizes the carriage; if she goes to the play she wants a box, whereas the bachelor pays for a stall only. In fact the wife is the exclusive representative of the fortune which formerly the bachelor represented alone. Suppose that your married couple have thirty thousand francs a year; as things are now, the rich bachelor degenerates into a poor devil who has to count the cost of a trip to Chantilly. Are there any children? then the parents are positively poor. Now seeing that Monsieur and Madame de Marville are barely fifty, the *expectations* are purely *reversionary* for fifteen or twenty years; no bachelor cares to carry them in his portfolio so long as that; and let me tell you that a calculating spirit has so deeply corroded the hearts of the unsophisticated young sparks who dance the polka at Mabille with *lorettes*, that all marriageable young men study the two aspects of the problem without needing *our* exposition of the subject. And between you and me, Mademoiselle de Marville leaves the *hearts* of her suitors quite calm enough to allow their *heads* to work; and the result is that they all of them indulge in these anti-matrimonial reflections. If any young fellow in possession of his senses and—an income of twenty thousand francs—forms a quiet little programme of marriage in harmony with his ambitious ideals, Mademoiselle de Marville does not at all correspond to it—"

"And why not?" asked the astonished musician.

"Oh!" replied the notary, "in these days almost every bachelor, though he be as plain as you and I are, my dear Pons, has the impudence to expect a wife with a marriage portion of six hundred thousand francs, with good blood in her veins, plenty of good looks, wit and education—a girl without a flaw—in short, a paragon."

"Then my cousin will have great difficulty in finding a husband?"

"She will not find one until her father and mother can make up their minds to add Marville to her portion; had they been willing to do that, she would now be Vicomtesse Popinot—but see, here is Monsieur Brunner; we are going to read the partnership deed of the house of Brunner & Co., and also the contract of marriage."

When the persons present had been introduced to one another and the customary compliments interchanged, Pons—who had been requested by the relatives of the parties to sign the contract as a witness—heard the deeds read. The party adjourned to the dining-room at about half-past five. The dinner was one of those sumptuous entertainments which men of business give when they fling away its cares for a season. The viands clearly showed that Graff, the landlord of the Hotel du Rhin, had relations with the best provision dealers in Paris. Never had Pons or Schmucke witnessed such good cheer. There were dishes on the table that were fit to *ravish the mind*—German paste of unexampled delicacy, smelts incomparably fried, a Geneva

ferra with the genuine Genevese sauce, and then there was a sauce for plum-pudding that would have astounded the famous London physician who is said to have invented it. The company did not leave the dinner table until ten o'clock. The quantity of Rhine wines and of French wines consumed would have astonished the dandies; for the amount of fluids which a German can imbibe, without exhibiting a single trace of exhilaration, transcends all knowledge. To gain any idea of it one must dine in Germany and behold bottle follow bottle (as wave succeeds to wave on some lovely Mediterranean strand), disappear just as if the Germans possessed the absorbent powers of sponge and sand. But this process goes on harmoniously unaccompanied by French noise and clatter: the talk remains as frigid as the rhetoric of a money-lender; the faces flush after the fashion of those of the brides whom we see in the frescos of Cornelius or Schnor, that is to say — imperceptibly; while tales of the past flow from the lips as slowly as the smoke curls upward from the pipe.

At about half-past ten, Pons and Schmucke were seated on a bench, in the garden, with the quondam flutist between them. They were discussing—with a very hazy notion of what they were talking about—their respective dispositions, opinions, and misfortunes. In the midst of this hotch-potch of confidences, Wilhelm mentioned his anxiety to get Fritz married, and dilated on the topic with vinous eloquence and force.

"What say you to the following programme for your friend?" whispered Pons to Wilhelm. "A charming young lady, full of good sense; age twenty-four; family of the highest distinction; father occupying one of the highest seats on the judicial bench; marriage portion, one hundred thousand francs; expectations, a million francs."

"Stop! I will go and mention it to Fritz at once," replied Wilhelm.

Thereupon the two musicians beheld Brunner and his friend walking round and round the garden, passing and repassing, and alternately speaking and listening. Pons's head was somewhat heavy—though he was not actually drunk—but his intellect was as active as its corporeal envelope was inert. Through the diaphanous haze that wine produces, he watched Fritz Brunner, and was bent upon tracing in his features indications of a desire for the joys of married life. Schwab lost no time in bringing his friend and partner and presenting him to Monsieur Pons; whereupon Fritz Brunner thanked the old gentleman for the trouble he deigned to take in the matter. A conversation then ensued, in the course of which the two old bachelors, Pons and Schmucke, lauded marriage to the skies and—with the utmost possible innocence—gave vent to the *double entendre*, that "marriage is *the end* of man." When amid the service of ices, tea, punch and cakes in the future apartments of the betrothed, the worthy tradesmen, nearly all of whom were drunk, learned that the sleeping partner in the banking-house was about to follow the example of his associate, the hilarity of the evening reached its climax.

It was two o'clock in the morning when Pons and Schmucke wended their way homeward along the boulevards, philosophizing, as they went, on the musical arrangement of things mundane until all trace of meaning was entirely lost.

On the morrow Pons repaired to the house of the president—his heart overflowing with the profound delight that arises from returning good for evil. Poor dear good soul! He assuredly attained to the sublime, as every one will admit, since we live in an age when the Montyon prize is awarded to those who do their duty by following the precepts of the Gospel.

"Ah! They will be under deep obligations to their parasite," he said to himself as he reached the Rue de Choiseul.

A man not wrapped up, as Pons was, in measureless content, a man of the world, a suspicious man would, on returning to that house under such circumstances, have observed Madame Camusot and her daughter. But the poor musician

was a child, a guileless artist whose faith in the non-existence of moral deformity equaled his devotion to æsthetical beauty; and accordingly the worthy man was enchanted with the blandishments lavished on him by Cecile and her mother. He who for the last twelve years had looked on while vaudeville, comedy and drama were being performed, was completely taken in by the grimaces of the social comedy: long familiarity with them had, no doubt, dulled his perceptive faculties in that regard. The covert hatred that Madame Camusot bore her husband's cousin since she had placed herself in the wrong may be easily imagined by those who frequent Parisian society and have grasped the aridity—both mental and physical—of Madame Camusot (ardent only in the pursuit of distinctions, and rabid with virtue), her hollow piety and arrogance—the arrogance of a woman who rules the roast at home. It will be understood, then, that all the demonstrative attentions of mother and daughter cloaked a formidable thirst for vengeance—vengeance that was obviously only deferred. For the first time in her life Amelie was in the wrong, and the husband, whom she henpecked, in the right; and—to crown all—she was compelled to make a show of affection toward the instrument of her defeat! Such a situation has no analogue except in the enmities that smolder for long years in the sacred college of cardinals or in the chapters of the heads of religious orders. When, at three o'clock, the president returned from the palace, Pons had scarcely finished his account of the marvelous incidents that led to his becoming acquainted with Frederick Brunner, of the dinner of yesterday evening, which had lasted till morning, and of all that concerned the aforesaid Frederick Brunner. Cecile, indeed, had come to the point at once by asking questions as to Brunner's style of dress, his height, his figure, the color of his hair and eyes; and then, having conjectured that Frederick was a man of distinguished appearance, she proceeded to express her admiration of his generous disposition.

"To give five hundred thousand francs to his companion in misfortune! Oh! mamma, I shall have a carriage and a box at the Italian Opera."

And as she thought of the realization of all her mother's ambition on her behalf and the accomplishment of the hopes that she had given up hoping, Cecile became almost pretty. As for Madame Camusot, she contented herself with uttering the single phrase: "My dear little daughter, you may be a wife within a fortnight."

All mothers who have daughters of twenty-three, address them as *little daughters!*

"Still, we must have time to make some inquiries," said the president; "I will never give my daughter to the first man who happens to present himself."

"As to inquiries," replied the old artist, "the deeds were prepared and signed in Berthier's office; and as to the young man himself, you know, my dear cousin, what you yourself said to me. Well, Brunner is over forty; one half of his head is hairless; he seeks, in family life, a haven of refuge from the storms of fate; I did not deter him from entering that haven; every man to his taste."

"Then there is all the more reason for our seeing Mr. Frederick Brunner," replied the president. "I don't want to bestow my daughter's hand on some valetudinarian."

"Well, cousin," said Pons, still addressing Madame Camusot, "you shall have an opportunity of deciding as to the eligibility of my suggested suitor within five days' time, if you be so minded; for, viewing the subject as you do, a single interview will enable you to arrive at a conclusion."

Here Cecile and Madame Camusot made a gesture indicative of their delight.

"Frederick," continued Cousin Pons, "Frederick, who is a very distinguished amateur, has begged me to allow him to examine my little collection. You have never seen my pictures and curiosities; come and see them," added Pons, addressing his two relatives; "you can

visit my apartments as two ladies introduced by my friend Schmucke; and you will form the acquaintance of the intended without being compromised. Frederick need not have any idea as to who you really are."

"Admirable!" exclaimed the president.

The attentions showered upon the formerly despised parasite may be easily imagined. On this day, at all events, the poor man *was* the *cousin* of Madame la Presidente. Drowning her hatred in the flood of her delight, the glad mother found looks and smiles and words that threw the good man into ecstasies; partly on account of the pleasure which he was conferring, and partly on account of the future of which he caught a glimpse. Would he not, in the houses of Brunner, Schwab, and Graff, find dinners resembling that which signalized the signing of the marriage-contract? He saw before him a land flowing with milk and honey—a marvelous succession of "*covered dishes*," gastronomic surprises, and exquisite wines.

"If Cousin Pons is the cause of our carrying through such a piece of business as this," said the president to his wife, when Pons had taken his departure, "we ought to secure him an income equal to his salary as conductor."

"Certainly," said Madame de Marville.

It was, therefore, agreed and decided that in case the intended suitor found favor in Cecile's eyes she should undertake the task of inducing the old musician to accept this mean munificence. The president, who was anxious to have authentic proof of the fortune of Mr. Frederick Brunner, went next day to Berthier the notary. Berthier, who had received an intimation from Madame Camusot, had sent for his new client, Schwab, the ex-flute. Dazzled at the prospect of such an alliance for his friend—we know how great is the respect of a German for social distinctions: in Germany a woman is Mrs. General, Mrs. Counselor, Mrs. Advocate So-and-so — dazzled by this prospect, Schwab was as complaisant as a collector who thinks that he is over-reaching a dealer in curiosities.

"As I intend to settle my estate of Marville on my daughter," said Cecile's father to Schwab, "I should above all things desire that the marriage should take place under the *régime dotal*. That being so, I should expect Monsieur Brunner to invest a million francs in land in order to increase the estate of Marville, and so constitute a dotal landed property which would render my daughter and her children independent of the fortunes of the bank."

Berthier rubbed his chin as he thought to himself: "The president knows what he is about." Schwab, after having had the effect of the *régime dotal* explained to him, did not hesitate to answer for his friend. The dotal clause carried out a wish which he had heard expressed by Fritz, namely, that he could discover some plan for securing himself from ever relapsing into his former penury.

"There is at this very time as much as twelve hundred thousand francs' worth of farms and pasture land for sale," said the president.

"A million francs invested in Bank of France shares will be enough to guarantee our account there," said Schwab. "Fritz does not want to employ more than two million francs in business; he will do what you wish, Monsieur le President."

The president made his wife and daughter almost mad with delight when he told them this news. Never had so rich a prize shown itself so docile in the matrimonial net.

"You will be Madame Brunner de Marville," said the father to his daughter; "for I will get permission for your husband to add that name to his own, and, later on, he will have letters of naturalization. If I am made a peer of France, he will succeed me!"

Madame Camusot devoted five days to the preparation of her daughter's toilet. On the day of the projected interview she dressed Cecile with her own hands, equipping her as carefully as the admiral of the blue equipped the yacht of England's queen when she started on her trip to Germany.

Pons and Schwab, on their part, cleaned

and dusted the Pons Museum, the apartments and furniture, as actively as if they had been sailors swabbing the decks of the admiral's flag-ship. There was not a speck of dust to be seen on the carved wood; every bit of copper gleamed with the polishing it had undergone; the glass coverings of the crayons were so clean that while protecting, they transparently displayed the works of Latour, of Greuze and of Liautard—Liautard, the illustrious author of "The Chocolate Pot," the miracle of this style of painting, which is, alas, so fugitive. The inimitable enamel of the Florentine bronzes glistened. The stained windows glowed in all their glorious hues. Everything shone after its kind, and breathed its music to the soul in that concert of masterpieces, arranged by two musicians, both of whom were poets, and poets of equal rank.

X.

A GERMAN IDEA.

KNOWING, and being skillful enough to evade, the difficulties of a first appearance on the scene, the two women were the first to arrive; for they wished to feel at home. Pons introduced his friend Schmucke to his two relatives; in whose eyes the old German seemed no better than an idiot. Engrossed as they were with the idea of a suitor who was a fourfold millionaire, the two dunces paid very little attention to the art lectures of the worthy Pons. They gazed with an eye of indifference upon Petitot's enamels, displayed in the red velvet fields of three marvelous frames. The flowers of Van Huysum and of David de Heim, the insects of Abraham Mignon, the Van Eycks, the Albert Durers, the genuine Cranachs, the Giorgione, the Sebastien del Piombo, the Backhuysen, the Hobbema, the Gericault, the rarities of painting, failed, one and all, to pique their curiosity; for they were waiting for the sun that was to light up these treasures. Yet the beauty of certain Etruscan jewels and the intrinsic value of the snuff-boxes *did* astonish them. They were in ecstasies—of complaisance—over some Florentine bronzes which they had in their hands, when in came Madame Cibot and announced—"Monsieur Brunner." Without turning round they profited by a superb Venetian mirror, framed in enormous pieces of carved ebony, to examine this phenix of aspiring swains.

Frederick, who had received a hint from Wilhelm, had made the most of the little hair that still remained to him; he wore a becoming pair of trousers of a color that was soft though somber, a very elegant silk waistcoat, the cut of which was entirely new, an open-work shirt of linen, woven by the hand of some Friesland woman, and a blue cravat with white stripes. His watch-chain and the handle of his cane were the handiwork of Florent and Chanor, while, as for the coat, Father Graff himself had made it, and of the finest cloth. Gloves of Swedish leather bespoke the man who had already devoured his maternal fortune. The mere gleam of his varnished boots was enough to suggest the little low-hung brougham of the banker, even if the ears of the two sly gossips had not already heard the rumbling of its wheels upon the pavement of the deserted Rue de Normandie.

When the debauchee of twenty is a chrysalis that is to develop into a banker, that debauchee at forty is a man of observation; and the observing faculty of Frederick Brunner was all the more acute in that he was perfectly well aware to what good account a German may turn his naïveté. On this eventful morning he had the pensive air of a man who is hesitating as to whether he shall embrace a married life or continue the dissipated career of a bachelor. Such a physiognomy on the shoulders of a Frenchified German seemed to Cecile superlatively romantic. In the child of the Virlazes she detected a Werther. (Where can you find a young girl who does not introduce a little *romance* into the *history* of her marriage?) When Brunner grew enthusiastic at the sight of the magnificent works of art—the fruit of forty years of

LA CIBOT AND RÉMONENCQ.

patient search—and—to Pons's intense delight—rated them at their real value, as no one had till then, Cecile deemed herself the happiest of womankind. "He must be a poet!" said Mademoiselle de Marville to herself. "He can see millions in this bric-à-brac." A *poet* is a man who does not reckon; who allows his wife to pull the purse-strings; a man easily managed; a man to be amused with trifles.

Every pane in the two windows of the old man's room was of Swiss stained glass. The smallest of the panes was worth a thousand francs, and there were sixteen of these masterpieces, which are, nowadays, the goal of many a voyage of discovery.

In 1815 these panes might have been bought for from six to ten francs apiece! The value of the sixty pictures—undoubted originals not retouched, but just as they came from the master's hand—of which this glorious collection consisted, could be tested only by the fierce competition of the auction-room. Each picture was incased in a frame of immense value; and there were specimens of every kind of frame: there was the Venetian frame, with its heavy ornaments, resembling those of the English plate of these days; there was the Roman frame, so remarkable on account of that which artists term its *fla-fla;* there was the Spanish frame, with its bold foliage; there were Flemish frames and German frames, with their naïve figures; there were tortoise-shell frames inlaid with pewter, copper, mother-of-pearl or ivory; there were frames in ebony, in boxwood, and in copper; there was the frame Louis Treize, the frame Louis Quinze, the frame Louis Seize—in short a unique collection of the very finest models. More fortunate than the curators of the treasures of Dresden and Vienna, Pons was the proud possessor of a frame by the celebrated Brustolone, the Michael Angelo of wood.

It was quite natural that Mademoiselle de Marville should require an explanatory description of each fresh curiosity that presented itself and that Brunner should initiate her into the knowledge of these marvels. Her exclamations were so naïve; she seemed so pleased to learn from Frederick's lips the value and the beauties of a picture, a piece of sculpture or a bronze, that the German fairly thawed, and his face resumed its youthful appearance. In short, both he and Cecile went further than they intended at this first meeting—which of course was treated as a chance meeting from first to last.

The séance lasted three hours. When it was over Brunner offered his arm to Cecile to conduct her down the staircase. As with prudent deliberation she descended the stairs still chattering about the Fine Arts, she embraced the opportunity of expressing her surprise at the admiration of her *intended* for the gewgaws of Cousin Pons.

"You think, then," said she, "that what we have just seen is worth a great deal of money?"

"Why, mademoiselle, if your cousin, Monsieur Pons, were willing to sell me his collection I would give him eight hundred thousand francs for it this very evening; and I should not have made a bad bargain either; the sixty pictures alone would fetch more than that at a public sale."

"I believe it, since you tell me so," replied Cecile; "and indeed you must be right, since you took more notice of the collection than of anything else."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Brunner, "my only answer to your reproach will be to ask Madame Camusot to allow me to call upon her in order that I may have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"How clever she is, the little darling!" thought Madame Camusot, who was close at her daughter's heels. "We shall be most delighted to see you, monsieur," she added aloud. "I hope that you will come with our cousin Pons and dine with us. My husband, the president, will be delighted to make your acquaintance. Thank you, Cousin Pons;" and so saying, she squeezed Pons's arm in so significant a manner that the consecrated phrase, "We are friends in life and in death," would not have expressed so much. The glance which accompanied this "Thank

you, cousin," was equivalent to an embrace.

After Brunner had seen the young lady to her carriage, and the carriage—a hired brougham—had turned the corner of the Rue Charlot, Brunner began to talk bric-à-brac to Pons, who was talking *marriage* to Brunner.

"So you see no impediment?" remarked Pons.

"Oh!" replied Brunner, "the little girl is insignificant, and the mother rather affected; we will see about it."

"A handsome fortune to come," observed Pons; "more than a million in expect—"

"Let's postpone the subject till Monday!" replied the millionaire. "If you care to sell your collection of pictures, I would willingly give five or six hundred thousand francs—"

"Indeed!" cried the worthy man, who did not know he was so rich. "But no; I could not part with that which makes my happiness—I could only sell my collection, to be delivered after my decease."

"Well, we will see about it."

"There are two pieces of business afloat," said the collector, who was thinking only of the marriage.

Brunner now took leave of Pons and was whirled away in his well-appointed equipage. Pons watched the brougham as it receded: he did not notice Remonencq, who was sitting on the doorstep, smoking his pipe.

Wishing to take her father's advice, Madame Camusot de Marville went that very evening to his house, and there found the Popinots. Eager to gratify a little feeling of revenge, very natural in a mother who has failed in her endeavor to catch the scion of a wealthy family, she announced that Cecile was on the point of making a splendid match. "Whom is Cecile going to marry then?" was the question that passed from mouth to mouth; and thereupon Madame la Presidente, without supposing that she was telling her secret, dropped so many little hints, and whispered so many little confidences—which Madame Berthier took care to confirm—that on the following day people were saying, in the *bourgeois* empyrean in which Pons's gastronomic orbit lay—"Oh! Cecil de Marville is going to be married to a young German, who is about to become a banker, from pure philanthropy, for he has a fortune of four million francs. He is a hero of romance, a genuine Werther, a charming, good-hearted fellow, who has sown his wild oats, and has fallen madly in love with Cecile; it is a case of love at first sight, and all the more likely to be lasting, inasmuch as Cecile was surrounded by rivals—all the painted Madonnas of Cousin Pons," etc., etc.

On the next day but one after the interview at Pons's rooms, sundry persons presented themselves to offer their congratulations to Madame Camusot; their sole object being to discover whether *the golden tooth* really existed. Thereupon the wife of the president performed the following admirable *variations* (which mothers may consult, as we used formerly to consult "The Complete Letter-Writer").

Thus, to Madame Chiffreville she said: "A marriage is not *made* until the bride and bridegroom have returned from the *mairie* and the church; and *we* have, as yet, gone no further than an interview; so I rely on your friendship not to talk about our hopes."

"You are very fortunate, Madame la Présidente; it is no easy matter to find husbands for our daughters in these times!"

"Well! you know, it is a mere accident; but marriages often come about in that way."

"Ah! so you have found a husband for Cecile?" said Madame Cardot.

"Yes," replied Madame Camusot, who fully understood all the malice of that *so;* "we were somewhat fastidious; that was what retarded Cecile's establishment in life. But now we have found all we required; fortune, amiability, good disposition, and an agreeable person; and I must say, that my dear little daughter deserved all that. Monsieur Brunner is a charming young man, full of distinction; he is fond of luxury, knows what

life is, and dotes upon Cecile; in fact he loves her sincerely. And, spite of his three or four millions, Cecile has accepted him. Our ambition did not soar so high, certainly, but, 'store is no sore.'"

"'Tis not the money that weighs with us; it is the love which my daughter has inspired," said Madame Camusot to Madame Lebas. "Monsieur Brunner is in so great a hurry, that he wants the wedding to take place immediately after the expiration of the interval required by law."

"He is a foreigner—"

"He is, madame; yet I own that I am quite contented. Why! Monsieur Brunner will be to me a son rather than a son-in-law. His delicacy is really quite captivating. You cannot conceive the alacrity with which he embraced the proposal that he should marry under the *régime dotal*. What a great safeguard for families that is! Monsieur Brunner will lay out twelve hundred thousand francs in pasture land, which will some day be added to Marville."

And on the following day there were other variations on the same theme. Monsieur Brunner was a *grand seigneur*, and was acting altogether like a grand seigneur; he never counted cost; and if Monsieur de Marville could obtain letters of naturalization for him—and the Minister owed Monsieur Camusot a little scrap of legislation—the son-in-law would become a peer of France. No one knew the extent of Monsieur Brunner's fortune; he had *the finest horses and the finest carriages in Paris*; etc., etc.

The pleasure that the Camusots took, in proclaiming their hopes, showed how unexpected was their triumph.

Immediately after the interview at Cousin Pons's lodgings, Monsieur de Marville, at the instigation of his wife, persuaded the minister of justice, the chief judge of his own court, and the attorney-general to dine with him on the day fixed for the introduction of this phenix of sons-in-law to the family circle; and, notwithstanding the brief notice they had received, the three grandees accepted the invitation; for they all fully understood the part assigned to them by paterfamilias, and gladly lent him their aid. In France, a mother of a family, who is fishing for a rich son-in-law, may count on receiving ready help. The Count and Countess Popinot, also, contributed by their presence to the splendor of the occasion (though they thought that to invite *them* showed a certain want of good taste). The dinner-party consisted of eleven persons; for Cecile's grandfather, Camusot senior, and his wife, were indispensable members of a reunion, which, from the standing and position of its members, was intended to bind Monsieur Brunner by a definitive engagement, from which it would be impossible for him to secede. He had already, as we have seen, been described as one of the richest of German capitalists, as a man of taste—did he not love the *dear little daughter?* —and as the future rival of the Nucingens, the Kellers, and the Du Tillets.

"To-day is our reception day," said Madame la Présidente, with stupid simplicity, as she ran over the names of the guests to the man whom she regarded as her son-in-law. "We have none but intimate friends here to-day. First, there is my husband's father, who, as you know, is about to be made a peer; then, there are the Count and Countess Popinot, whose son's suit to Cecile we rejected, on account of his not being rich enough, though we are still very good friends; there are the minister of justice, our chief president, our attorney-general — our friends, in short. We shall be obliged to dine rather late, on account of the House, which never rises till six o'clock."

Brunner looked at Pons in a significant manner, and Pons rubbed his hands, as much as to say, "You see what sort of friends *we* have, *I* have!"

Madame Camusot (like a clever woman, as she was) had something to say to her cousin in private, in order to leave Cecile alone with her Werther for a moment. Cecile chattered away, and skillfully contrived that Frederick should catch a glimpse of a German dictionary, a German grammar and a Goethe which she had *hidden*.

"Ah! you are learning German!" said

Brunner, turning red. (It is only French women who can invent these little traps.)

"Oh!" cried Cecile, "how mischievous you are! It is not right, sir, to ransack my little hiding-places in that way. I want to read Goethe in the original: I began learning German two years ago."

"Then the grammar must be extremely difficult to master; for there are only ten pages cut," replied Brunner naïvely; whereupon Cecile blushed, and turned away in order to hide her confusion. Now tokens such as these, no German can possibly withstand; and accordingly Brunner seized the hand of Cecile, drew her, all disconcerted as she was, within the range of his regard, and gazed at her, as lovers do gaze at one another, in the romances of Auguste Lafontaine of pudibund memory.

"You are adorable!" he murmured. The rebellious gesture with which Cecile greeted these words meant: "And what are *you*, then? Who could help loving *you?*"

When her mother and Pons rejoined her, she whispered to the former: "All's well, mamma."

The appearance presented by a family during such an evening beggars description. Every one was pleased to see a mother securing a good match for her child. Brunner, who pretended not to understand anything, Cecile who understood everything, and the president who went about fishing for congratulations, each and all received double-meaninged—or double-barreled—felicitations. When Cecile, in an undertone, and in the most ingenious and gingerly manner possible, imparted to Pons her father's intentions with reference to the annuity of twelve hundred francs, all the blood in the old man's body seemed to be tingling in his ears; he felt as if all the gas-jets in the footlights of his theater were flaring before his eyes, and he flatly declined the offer, assigning as a reason for his refusal the revelation which had fallen from Brunner's lips as to the value of the Pons Museum.

The minister, the chief president, the attorney-general, all the busy folk, now withdrew; and, very shortly afterward, Camusot senior and the ex-notary Cardot, supported by his son-in-law Berthier, were the only guests—Pons and Brunner excepted—that remained in the room. The worthy Pons, finding himself quite *en famille,* and yielding, as men of feeling invariably do yield, to the impulse of the moment, most inopportunely thanked the president and Madame de Marville for the offer that Cecile had just conveyed to him; whereupon Brunner, to whom this annuity, thus offered, seemed like a premium, was struck by an Israelitish reflection, and assumed an attitude which betokened the more than frigid reverie of the calculator.

"Whether I come to terms with our friend Brunner about my collection, or keep it, the collection, or its proceeds, will, in any case, belong to your family," said Pons, when he had informed his astonished relatives that he possessed so large a fortune.

The overindulgence of both father and mother toward Cecile—the idol of the household—had not escaped the observation of Brunner; neither did the favorable change in the bearing of all these ignoramuses toward the man thus promoted from a state that was branded with pauperism to affluence fail to impress him: accordingly, he began to amuse himself, by exciting the surprise of these worthy *bourgeois,* and extorting ejaculations of wonder from their lips.

"I told Mademoiselle Cecile that Monsieur Pons's pictures were worth that sum to me; but, having regard to the price which all that is unique in art has reached in these days, there is no foreseeing how much this collection might fetch if it were put up for public competition. The sixty pictures would sell for a million francs; I saw several that were worth fifty thousand francs apiece."

"It is a good thing to be your inheritant," said the quondam notary to Pons.

"But my inheritant is my cousin Cecile," replied Pons, still persisting in his claim to relationship.

Every one seemed to be seized with a sudden admiration for the old musician.

"She will be a very rich heiress," said Cardot, laughing; and off he went.

Camusot senior, the president, Madame Camusot, Cecile, Brunner, Berthier and Pons were now left together by the rest of the party; for it was presumed that a formal demand for Cecile's hand would now be made. And, in fact, so soon as the persons just mentioned were alone, Brunner opened fire with an inquiry which seemed to Cecile's relatives to augur well.

"I believe I was given to understand," said Brunner, addressing Madame Camusot, "that Mademoiselle Cecile is an only daughter—"

"Certainly," replied the lady, proudly.

"You will meet with no difficulties in any quarter," said the worthy Pons, in order to determine Brunner to formulate his request.

But Brunner suddenly became thoughtful; a fatal silence diffused the strangest chill among the assembled group; had Madame Camusot admitted that her *little daughter* was epileptic, things could not have been worse. The president, thinking that his daughter was best away, made a sign to Cecile, which she interpreted correctly by leaving the room. Brunner still remained silent; the persons present began to stare at one another; and the situation became most embarrassing. Thereupon Camusot senior (who was a man of experience), guessing that some difficulties had supervened, took the German into Madame Camusot's room, under pretense of showing him the fan which Pons had discovered, and motioned to his son, his daughter-in-law, and Pons to leave him and Brunner alone together.

"There is the masterpiece!" said the old silk-merchant, pointing to the fan.

"It is worth five thousand francs," replied Brunner, after having examined it.

"Did you not come here, monsieur, with the intention of asking for my granddaughter's hand?" pursued the future peer of France.

"I did, monsieur," said Brunner; "and I entreat you to believe that no alliance could be more flattering to me than this. I shall never find a young lady handsomer, more amiable, or more to my taste than Mademoiselle Cecile; but—"

"Oh! no *buts,*" said old Camusot; "or if there are to be any *buts*, translate them at once, my dear sir—"

"Monsieur," pursued Brunner, seriously, "I am heartily glad that there is no engagement on either side; for the quality of being an only daughter—a quality that is so valuable in the eyes of every one, except myself—forms an insuperable impediment—"

"What, sir," broke in the astounded grandfather, "do you convert that which is an immense advantage into a positive drawback? Your conduct is really so extraordinary that I should be extremely glad to hear your reasons for it."

"Sir," replied the German, phlegmatically, "I came here, this evening, with the intention of asking Monsieur le President for his daughter's hand: I wished to insure to Mademoiselle Cecile a brilliant future, by offering her as much of my fortune as she should be willing to accept; but an only daughter is a child who has been allowed, through parental indulgence, to do as she pleased, and has never known what it is to be thwarted in her wishes. This family resembles many families, in which I, formerly, had an opportunity of studying the worship that is offered to this species of divinity; not only is your granddaughter the idol of the household, but it is Madame la Presidente who wears the — you know what! Sir, these eyes of mine have seen my father's home turned into a hell from this very cause: my step-mother — the fountain from which all my misfortunes flowed—an only daughter, the idol of her parents, the most charming of brides, turned out an incarnate fiend. I have no doubt that Mademoiselle Cecile is an exception to my general rule: but I am no longer a young man; I am a man of forty; and the disparity of our ages involves difficulties which prevent me from conferring happiness on a young lady who is accustomed to be obeyed by Madame la Presidente, and to whom Madame la Presidente listens as to an oracle. By what

right could I exact from Mademoiselle Cecile an entire change of habits and ideas? Instead of a father and mother, accustomed to bow to her lightest caprice, she would find in me an egotistical quadragenarian: if she resists that egotism, 'tis the quadragenarian who will be vanquished. As a man of honor, therefore, I withdraw my suit. I desire, moreover, to take upon myself all the blame of this rupture; if, however, it should be necessary to explain why I have paid but one visit to this house—"

"If such, monsieur, be the motives of your conduct," interposed the future peer, "however singular they may appear, they are at least plausible—"

"I beg, monsieur, that you will not cast the slightest doubt upon my sincerity," replied Brunner, emphatically, interrupting Monsieur Camusot. "If you know of some poor girl, one of an over-numerous family, one who, though portionless, has been well brought up—and there are many such girls in France—I am quite ready to marry her, if her disposition be such as to promise me happiness."

During the silence which succeeded this announcement, Frederick Brunner quitted Cecile's grandfather, and, having politely taken leave of the president and his wife, departed. A living commentary on the parting salutation of her Werther, Cecile now reappeared, pale as a person at the point of death. Concealed in her mother's wardrobe she had overheard every word that had been uttered.

"Refused," she murmured in her mother's ears.

"And on what ground?" demanded Madame Camusot of her embarrassed father-in-law.

"Upon the pretty pretext that only daughters are spoiled children," replied the old man. "And he is not altogether wrong," added he, embracing this opportunity of attacking his daughter-in-law, who had been boring him to death for twenty years.

"This will kill my daughter! and *you* will be her murderer!" said Madame Camusot, addressing Pons, while she supported her daughter, who thought proper to justify her mother's language by sinking into her arms.

The president and his wife dragged Cecile to an armchair, where she completed her fainting fit. The grandfather rang for the servants.

XI.

PONS BURIED IN GRAVEL.

"I DETECT the plot which that gentleman has brewed," said the furious mother, pointing to Pons.

At these words, Pons sprung up as if the last trumpet had resounded in his ears.

"That gentleman," pursued Madame Camusot, whose eyes resembled two fountains of green bile, "that gentleman has seen fit to revenge a harmless joke with an insult. Who will believe that this German is in his right mind? Either he is the accomplice of an atrocious act of vengeance, or he is mad. I hope, Monsieur Pons, that, for the future, you will spare us the pain of seeing you in a house into which you have endeavored to introduce shame and dishonor."

Pons, who was now changed into a statue, kept his eyes fixed upon a rose in the pattern of the carpet, and twiddled his thumbs.

"Well! you are still there, you *monster* of ingratitude!" cried Madame Camusot, looking round. "We shall never be at home—neither your master nor I—if this gentleman should ever call!" she added, speaking to the servants, and pointing to Pons. "Go you, John, and fetch the doctor, and you, Madeleine, bring some hartshorn, quick!"

In Madame Camusot's view of the matter, the reasons assigned by Brunner were mere pretexts, concealing reasons that were unavowed; but *that* rendered the rupture of the proposed marriage all the more certain. With that rapidity of thought which women are wont to display in critical emergencies, Madame

Camusot had hit upon the only feasible plan for retrieving the check she had sustained, namely, to charge Pons with an act of premeditated revenge. This device —an infernal device, so far as Pons was concerned—saved the honor of the family. Constant in her hatred of Pons, she had clothed a woman's mere suspicion with the garb of absolute truth. Women, for the most part, have a creed of their own and a morality of their own; they believe in the objective reality of everything that it suits their interests and passions to believe. Madame Camusot, however, went a great deal further than that; she consumed the whole evening in forcing upon the president her own convictions; and on the morrow, the magistrate was thoroughly persuaded of his cousin's guilt. Now no one will deny that the conduct of Madame Camusot was execrable; yet, there is not a mother, who, in like circumstances, would not act as Madame Camusot acted. Every mother will sacrifice the honor of a stranger to that of her own daughter; the means employed will be different; the result to be achieved will be the same.

The musician rushed downstairs with great rapidity; but as he made his way toward the boulevard, and thence onward to the theater, his steps were slow. Mechanically he entered the play-house; mechanically he stepped into his place; mechanically he conducted the orchestra. During the *entr'acts,* he replied so vaguely to the questions addressed to him by Schmucke, that Schmucke kept his uneasiness to himself; for he thought that Pons had fairly taken leave of his senses. For a man so childlike as Pons was, the scene which had just occurred assumed all the dimensions of a catastrophe. To arouse a hideous hate there where he had meant to introduce happiness, was a complete subversion of existence. From the eyes, from the gestures, and from the voice of Madame Camusot he had learned —at last—that she was his deadly foe.

On the morrow, Madame Camusot came to a decisive resolution, which suited the nature of the case, and was indorsed with her husband's approbation. It was resolved that Cecile's portion should be made to comprise the estate of Marville, the hotel in the Rue de Hanovre, and a hundred thousand francs in cash. In the course of the morning, Madame Camusot, fully understanding that the only mode of repairing such a defeat as she had sustained was by a ready-made match, went to call upon the Countess Popinot, to whom she told the tale of Pons's frightful vengeance and of the terrible hoax that he had concerted. Everything seemed credible when the reason assigned for the breaking off of the match was the fact of Cecile's being an only daughter. At the close of her harangue, Madame Camusot dexterously displayed the advantages of being called Popinot de Marville, and the magnificence of the marriage portion. Regard being had to the value of landed property in Normandy, and calculating interest at two per cent, the estate of Marville represented a capital of about nine hundred thousand francs; and the hotel in the Rue de Hanovre was valued at two hundred and fifty thousand francs. No reasonable family could reject such an alliance; and, accordingly, Count Popinot and his wife accepted it. Then, as having a personal interest in the reputation of the family of which they were about to form a part, they promised to assist in explaining the catastrophe which had occurred on the preceding evening.

So now, in the house of this identical Camusot senior, Cecile's grandfather, and in the presence of those identical persons, who, but a few days before, had been gathered together in that very house, and had heard from the lips of Madame Camusot the Brunner-litany, the same Madame Camusot, whom every one shrunk from accosting, boldly anticipated all the difficulties of an explanation.

"Really," said she, "in these days it is impossible to take too many precautions when it is a question of marriage; and more especially where one has foreigners to deal with."

"And why, madame?" said a lady.

"What has happened to you?" asked Madame Chiffreville.

"What? Do you mean to say you haven't heard of our adventure with this fellow, Brunner, who had the audacity to aspire to the hand of Cecile? He is the son of a German tavern-keeper; his uncle used to sell rabbit-skins."

"Is it possible? And you so prudent!" exclaimed a lady.

"These adventurers are so cunning! But we have learned the whole story from Berthier. This German has a friend—a poor wretch of a flute-player! He is on intimate terms with a man who keeps a lodging-house in the Rue du Mail, and with tailors. We discovered that he has led a life of the grossest debauchery; and *no* fortune can suffice for a scamp who has already squandered all that he inherited from his mother—"

"Why, your daughter would have led a most miserable life!" said Madame Berthier.

"And how did he contrive to get introduced to you?" inquired the aged Madame Lebas.

"Oh, through a bit of revenge, on the part of Monsieur Pons; he, it was, who introduced to us this worthy gentleman, in order to make us look ridiculous. This Brunner — Brunner, by-the-by, means Fountain, and they palmed him off upon us as a *grand seigneur,* forsooth. This Brunner is a man of broken constitution, a man with a bald head and bad teeth; so that to see him, even once only, was quite enough to put me upon my guard."

"But how about this large fortune that you mentioned?" said a young woman, timidly.

"The fortune is not so large as it is said to be. The tailors, the lodging-house keeper, and he, all clubbed together, and scraped out their cash-boxes to form a bank. What is a bank nowadays—that is to say, to start one? Why, it is merely a license to become a bankrupt. A woman goes to bed a millionaire, and wakes to find herself stripped of everything but her paraphernalia. Our opinion of this gentleman was formed as soon as we heard him speak, nay, directly we caught sight of him; you can tell, from his very gloves, from his very overcoat, that he is nothing but a common workman, whose father kept a German cook-shop; that he is a low-minded fellow, who drinks beer, and smokes—(oh! madame! would you believe it?)—*five-and-twenty pipes* a day! What a destiny for my poor Lili! The very thought of it makes me shudder even now. But *God* preserved us from it! Besides, Lili had no love for the man. Now could we, I ask you, expect such a hoax on the part of a relative, of one who was a constant visitor at our house, who had been dining with us twice a week for the last twenty years; a man whom we have loaded with favors, and who played his part so thoroughly that he actually named Cecile as his heir in the presence of the keeper of the seals, the attorney-general and the first president. This Brunner and Monsieur Pons had agreed to represent each other to be millionaires. No, I do assure you, all you ladies would have been taken in by this artist's hoax!"

Within a few weeks after this gathering, the united families of Popinot and Camusot and their adherents had gained an easy victory in society; for no one there undertook the defense of the wretched Pons, the parasite, the sullen schemer, the miser, the pretended good fellow, who now lay buried beneath a mountain of contempt, and was regarded as a viper nursed in the bosom of the family—as a man of almost unparalleled depravity—a dangerous buffoon, whom it was desirable entirely to forget.

About a month after the Werther—who was no Werther—had declined the match, poor Pons, just risen from a sick-bed, to which he had been confined by a nervous fever, was sunning himself along the boulevards, leaning on Schmucke's arm. None of the loungers on the Boulevard du Temple laughed at the Pair of Nut-Crackers now—the broken aspect of the one and the touching solicitude of the other on behalf of his convalescent friend were not subjects for ridicule.

When the two friends had reached the Boulevard Poissonniere, Pons had regained a little color through breathing the air of the boulevards, which is so

bracing; for wherever there is a dense throng of human beings the atmosphere is so vitalizing that the exemption from *mala aria* of the noisome Ghetto, which swarms with Jews, is notorious at Rome. Perhaps, also, the sight of that which had been a source of daily delight to him—the grand panorama of Parisian life—exercised a restorative influence on the sick man. The two friends were walking arm-in-arm; but from time to time Pons would leave Schmucke's side to go and examine the novelties recently exposed for sale in the shop windows. Quitting Schmucke's arm in front of the Varieties Theater to make one of these excursions, Pons found himself face to face with Count Popinot, whom he accosted in the most respectful manner; for the ex-Minister was one of those men for whom Pons entertained the highest respect and esteem.

"Ah, monsieur!" replied the peer of France with great severity, "I cannot understand how you can be so wanting in tact as to salute a person connected with the family which you have tried to cover with disgrace and ridicule by an act of revenge such as artists well know how to devise. Understand, monsieur, that from this day forth you and I must be strangers to one another. Madame la Comtesse Popinot shares the indignation with which your conduct toward the Marvilles has inspired the whole circle."

Having thus delivered himself, the former Minister passed on, leaving Pons thunderstruck. The passions, Justice and the Government, invariably fail to take into consideration the condition of the beings whom they punish. The statesman, impelled by family interests to annihilate Pons, was blind to the physical weakness of this formidable foe.

"What is the madder wid you, my boor friend?" cried Schmucke, turning as pale as Pons himself.

"I have just received another dagger-thrust in my heart," replied the worthy man, leaning heavily on Schmucke's arm; "I do believe that it is only the good God Himself who has the right to do good; and that that is why all those who meddle with what is His business only are so cruelly punished for their conduct."

This artist's sarcasm was a supreme effort on the part of this excellent creature, who wished to dissipate the terror imprinted on the features of his friend.

"I belief so too," replied Schmucke, with simplicity.

The whole matter was quite incomprehensible to Pons, to whom neither the Camusots nor the Popinots had sent any invitation to be present at Cecile's wedding. On the Boulevard des Italiens he saw Monsieur Cardot coming toward him; but, warned by the allocution of the peer of France, Pons took good care not to stop this personage, with whom he had dined once a fortnight during the past year, and confined himself to bowing to Monsieur Cardot; but the mayor and deputy simply looked at Pons with an indignant air, and did not return his salutation.

"Go and ask him what is the grievance that they all have against me?" said poor Pons to Schmucke, who knew all the details of the catastrophe which had overtaken Pons.

"Monsire," said Schmucke to Cardot, astutely, "my friend Bons has just regovered from an illness, and no doubt you did not recognize him."

"Oh, perfectly," said Cardot.

"But what have you to rebroage him wid?"

"Your friend is a monster of ingratitude; and that he still lives is only another confirmation of the proverb, 'Ill weeds grow apace.' The world is quite justified in its distrust of artists; they are as malignant and as mischievous as monkeys. Your friend has endeavored to disgrace his own family, and to blast the reputation of a young lady in order to revenge a harmless joke; I am resolved to have nothing more to do with him; I will endeavor to forget that I have ever known him—that such a person exists. These sentiments, monsieur, are those of all the members of my family and his family, and of those persons who did Monsieur Pons the honor to receive him as their guest."

"But, monsire, you are a reazonaple mann; and iff you will allow me, I will egsplain de madder—"

"Remain his friend if you have the heart to do so; you are free to do as you please, monsieur; but do not go beyond that, for I deem it my duty to warn you that I shall extend my reprobation to those who may attempt either to excuse or to defend him."

"To chuzdify him?" said Schmucke.

"Yes; for his conduct is as unjustifiable as it is unqualifiable." And with this repartee the deputy for the Seine pursued his path, unwilling to listen to a single syllable further.

When Schmucke had repeated these savage imprecations to poor Pons, the latter said, with a smile: "Well, I have already the two powers of the state against me."

"Efferyding is againzt us," groaned Schmucke. "Let us go away, to afoid meeting any oder beasts."

This was the first time in the whole course of his lamb-like existence that Schmucke had been known to give vent to such an expression. Never, until now, had his almost God-like mildness been disturbed; he would have greeted with a smile—an artless smile—any misfortune that might have happened to himself; but to see his noble Pons, that "mute inglorious" Aristides, that meek, unmurmuring man of genius, that soul so full of the milk of human kindness, that jewel of loving-kindness, that heart of purest gold, maltreated, roused within him all the indignation of Alceste, and made him term his friend's Amphitryons—*beasts!* In a man of his pacific disposition, that excitatiou was equivalent to all Orlando's rage. With wise precaution, Schmucke induced Pons to turn back to the Boulevard du Temple, whither Pons allowed himself to be led; for he was now in the condition of a combatant who has ceased to count the blows that he receives. As chance would have it, nothing in the world was to be wanting to the combination against the poor musician. The social avalanche that overwhelmed him was to include every element — the house of peers, the chamber of deputies, the family, the stranger, the strong, the weak, yea, even the innocent!

As Pons was on his way homeward on the Boulevard Poissonniere, he saw coming toward him the daughter of this very Monsieur Cardot—a young lady who had suffered enough misfortunes to render her indulgent. She had made a *faux-pas* that had been kept secret; and had resigned herself to be her husband's slave. Among all the ladies who presided over the houses at which Pons dined, Madame Berthier was the only one whom he called by her Christian name: he addressed her as Felicie; and at times he fancied that she understood him. This gentle creature seemed annoyed at meeting her cousin Pons—for, as a cousin, Pons was treated, in spite of the absence of all relationship between him and the family of his cousin's second wife — but being unable to avoid him, Felicie Berthier stopped and confronted the dying man.

"I did not think that you were wicked, cousin," said Felicie; "but if only one quarter of what I hear said about you be true, you must be thoroughly false. Oh! do not attempt to justify yourself," added she, with emphasis, observing Pons's gesture; "it would be useless for two reasons; first, because I have forfeited the right to condemn, to judge, or to accuse any one, knowing, as I do, from my own case, that those who seem to be most completely in the wrong may have excuses to offer; and secondly, because your explanations would be unavailing. Monsieur Berthier, who drew up the contract of marriage between Mademoiselle de Marville and Viscount Popinot, is so indignant with you that if he knew that I have spoken even a single word to you, that I have addressed you even for the last time, he would certainly scold me. Everybody is against you."

"So I perceive, madame," replied the poor musician in a voice broken by emotion. Then bowing respectfully to the notary's wife, he weariedly resumed his journey to the Rue de Normandie, leaning so heavily upon Schmucke's arm that the old German could not fail to feel that his

friend was making a brave attempt to bear up against physical exhaustion. This third encounter was, as it were, a verdict pronounced by the Lamb that reposes at the feet of God: the wrath of this angel of the poor—this symbol of the peoples—is the final utterance of Heaven! After this the two friends reached home without exchanging a single word. There are certain critical occasions in life when all that we can bear is to feel that our friend is near us. Spoken consolation serves only to irritate the wound by exposing its depth. The old pianist possessed, as you may see, the genius of friendship; the delicacy of those who, having suffered much, well know the mood of those who suffer.

It was decreed that this should be the last walk that the worthy Pons should ever take. His original malady was immediately succeeded by another. Pons's temperament was of that kind which is called sanguino-bilious: the bile now passed into his blood; he was attacked by a violent inflammation of the liver. These two successive maladies being the only ailments from which Pons had ever suffered, he knew no doctor; so the feeling and devoted Madame Cibot hit upon an idea which in any case would have been excellent, and was, in its incipience, even motherly: she called in the doctor of the district.

There is in every district in Paris a doctor whose name and residence are known to the poor, to the small shopkeepers, and to the porters of the vicinity only; and who is, therefore, called the district doctor. This doctor, who acts as accoucheur and blood-letter, is the "servant of all work" of the medical profession. The district doctor, who cannot choose but be good to the poor, and has, by dint of long practice, acquired considerable skill in his vocation, is generally liked. Dr. Poulain, having been introduced to the sick-room by Madame Cibot and recognized by Schmucke, lent a careless ear to the complaints of the old musician who throughout the night had been scratching his skin, now completely callous. The state of the eyes, which were surrounded by yellow circles, corresponded with this symptom.

"You have experienced some violent grief within the last two days, have you not?" said the doctor to his patient.

"Alas, yes," replied Pons.

"You are suffering from the disorder which that gentleman so narrowly escaped," said Poulain, pointing to Schmucke. "I mean the jaundice. But it will be a mere trifle," he added, as he proceeded to write a prescription. Notwithstanding this last most reassuring phrase, the doctor had cast at his patient one of those Hippocratean glances in which a sentence of death (veiled though it may be by conventional sympathy) may always be read by the eyes of those who are interested in knowing the truth. Madame Cibot, accordingly, who scrutinized the doctor's glance with all the keen penetration of a spy, was not deceived by the tone in which his remark was uttered, nor by the hypocritical mask that he assumed; she therefore followed Dr. Poulain when he went away, and when they had reached the landing, inquired:

"Do you really think it will be a mere trifle?"

"My dear Madame Cibot, your patient is a dead man; not on account of the invasion of the bile into the blood, but on account of his moral prostration. However, with a great deal of care, the patient may yet recover; he should be got away from here and taken for a trip—"

"And where is the money to come from?" inquired the portress. "All he has is his berth; and his friend lives upon a small allowance from certain grand ladies to whom he's been of some service, according to his own account—some very charitable ladies. It's just two children as I've been looking after these nine years."

"My life is spent in attending people who die — not from their illnesses, but from that great and incurable disease, the want of money. In how many a garret am I compelled, far from exacting payment for my visit, to leave half a crown upon the chimney-piece!"

"Poor, dear Monsieur Poulain!" exclaimed Madame Cibot. "Ah, if you only had a hundred thousand francs a year, like certain *screws* in this quarter, who n'are just so many devils let loose from hell, you'd be the agent of the good God here n'on earth!"

The doctor, who, thanks to the good will of those worthy gentlemen the porters of his arrondissement, had succeeded in getting together a little connection which brought him barely enough to live upon, here raised his eyes to heaven and thanked Madame Cibot by a grimace worthy of Tartuffe himself.

"You say, then, my dear Monsieur Poulain, that with great care our dear patient may pull round?"

"Yes; unless the inner man has sustained too severe a shock from the grief he has undergone."

"Poor man! who *could* have caused *him* grief? He's a brave fellow, who n'hasn't his like on earth, except his friend, Monsieur Schmucke! I'll find n'out what has brought him to this pass; and I warrant *I* gives a good dressing to the folks who've been and riled *my gentleman*."

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," said the doctor, who was now standing on the step of the carriage-gate; "one of the principal features of the disease from which your 'gentleman' is suffering is a constant irritability over trifles; and as it is not probable that he can call in a nurse, you will have to look after him yourself. So you understand?"

"Ish it about Moshieur Ponsh shat you are shpeaking?" asked the dealer in old iron, who was engaged in smoking his pipe, and now, as he uttered the question, rose from the stone on which he was sitting to join in the conversation of the portress and the doctor.

"Yes, Daddy Remonencq," replied Madame Cibot to the Auvergnat.

"Well, shen! he ish riesher than Moshieur Monishtrol, and she lordsh of she curioshitiesh. I knowsh enough about art to tell you shat she dear man hash treasshures!"

"Well," said Madame Cibot to Remonencq, "I thought you was a-laughing at me the other day when I showed you all those *antiqualities*, while my gentlemen were out."

At Paris, where the very paving-stones have ears, where every door has a tongue, where the window-bars have eyes, nothing is more dangerous than a conversation in front of a carriage-gate. The parting words there uttered, which are to the preceding conversation what the postscript is to a letter, are sure to contain avowals that are fraught with danger alike to those who make, and to those who overhear them.

A single illustration of this truth may serve to corroborate that which this history presents.

XII.

"GOLD IS A CHIMERA."—(WORDS BY M. SCRIBE, MUSIC BY MEYERBEER, SCENERY BY REMONENCQ.)

One of the most celebrated hair-dressers of the imperial epoch—an epoch during which men devoted a great deal of attention to the hair and its arrangement—was one day leaving a certain house wherein he had just been dressing the hair of a pretty woman, and of which all the principal occupants gave him their support. Among these there was a certain old bachelor, armed with a—housekeeper who hated the lawful heirs of her master. A consultation of the most famous physicians of the day—who were not as yet called the *princes* of the science—had just been held over the case of the *ci-devant* young man who was seriously ill. It so happened that the doctors and the hair-dresser left the house at the very same moment; and that the doctors, halting on the step of the carriage-gate, began to chatter to each other, as they do when the consultation farce is over; that is to say, in all scientific sincerity and truth. "He is a dead man," said Dr. Haudry. "Miracles apart, he has not a month to live," replied Desplein. These words the barber overheard.

Now this barber, like all other barbers, kept a good understanding with the servants of his employers. Spurred by an exorbitant desire to grow rich, he immediately returns to the apartments of the *ci-devant* young man, and promises the servant-mistress a handsome premium if she can persuade her master to sink a large part of his fortune in an annuity. Now the moribund old bachelor, who was fifty-six according to the calendar, but twice that age, regard being had to his amorous campaigns, possessed, among other property, a magnificent mansion situated in the Rue Richelieu, and then worth two hundred and fifty thousand francs. This mansion—the object of the barber's greed—was sold to him in consideration of an annuity of thirty thousand francs.

The transaction in question occurred in 1806. In 1846 the barber—who has now retired and is seventy years of age—*is still paying the annuity.* Now, seeing that the *ci-devant* young man is at present ninety-six, is in his dotage, and has married his Madame Everard, he may remain upon his legs a long time yet; and since the barber gave something like thirty thousand francs to the aforesaid lady, the house has stood him in more than a million francs; but it is now worth from eight to nine hundred thousand francs.

Remonencq, like this barber, had overheard the last words addressed to Pons by Brunner upon the gate-step on the day when that phenix of suitors had his first interview with Cecile; and these last words had filled the Auvergnat with a desire to penetrate into the Pons Museum. Being on good terms with the Cibots, it was not long ere he was introduced into the rooms of the two friends during their absence. Dazzled by so much wealth, Remonencq saw that there was "a stroke of business to be done"—which is dealer's slang for "a fortune to be stolen"—and he had been pondering over the matter for five or six days.

"I am sho much in earnesht," said he to Madame Cibot and Dr. Poulain, "zhat we will talk she matter over, and if zish good shentlemansh wansh an annuishy of fifty thousandsh franeshs, I will give you a hamper of ordinary winesh, if you will—"

"What can you be thinking about?" said the doctor to Remonencq. "An annuity of fifty thousand francs! But if the worthy man is so rich and is attended by me and nursed by Madame Cibot, why, he may recover—for liver complaints are the concomitant drawbacks of very strong constitutions—"

"Did I shay fifty? Why a shentlemansh—zhare on zhe very shtep of your gate—offered him sheven hundred shousand franesh, and for zhe picturesh only—fouchtra!"

When Madame Cibot heard this declaration of Remonencq's she looked at Dr. Poulain with a very strange expression on her face: the devil was kindling a sinister flame in those orange-colored eyes of hers.

"Come, don't let's listen to such idle tales," resumed the doctor, who was very glad to learn that his patient was abler to pay him for all the visits he was about to make.

"Monsheur le docteure, if my dear Madame Shibot, shinsh zhe shentlemans ish in bed, will allow me to bring my exshpert, I am sure to find zhe money in two hoursh' time, even if it ish a question of sheven hundred shousand franesh—"

"All right, my friend," replied the doctor. "Come, Madame Cibot, take good care not to exasperate the patient; you must put on your armor of patience; for everything will irritate and weary him—even your attentions. You must be prepared to find him grumbling at everything."

"He will be very hard to please if he does," said the portress.

"Now, mark well what I say," pursued the doctor, authoritatively. "The life of Monsieur Pons is in the hands of those who have the care of him. So I shall come to see him perhaps twice a day; I shall commence my rounds with him—"

The doctor had suddenly passed from the supreme indifference with which he regarded the fate of his pauper patients to the most tender solicitude. The ear-

nestness of the speculator had impressed him with the idea that this fortune might be a reality.

"He shall be waited on like a king," replied Madame Cibot, with factitious enthusiasm.

The portress waited until the doctor had turned into the Rue Charlot ere she resumed the conversation with Remonencq. The old-iron dealer meanwhile was finishing his pipe, with his back leaning against the jamb of his shop-door. He had not taken up this position undesignedly. He wanted the portress to come to *him.*

This shop, which had formerly been used as a *café,* had undergone no alteration since the Auvergnat had taken it on lease. The words CAFÉ DE NORMANDIE were still legible on the long entablature which surmounts the glass frontage of all modern shops. The Auvergnat had got some house-decorator's apprentice to paint (gratis, no doubt) the words: *Remonencq, ferrailleur, achéte les marchandises d'occasion,* in the space left beneath the words CAFÉ DE NORMANDIE. As a matter of course, the mirrors, tables, stools, what-nots, and all the furniture of the Café de Normandie had been sold. Remonencq had hired, at an outlay of six hundred francs, the bare shop, the back parlor, the kitchen, and, on the mezzanine floor, a single room that had once been the bedroom of the head-waiter at the *café.* The other rooms belonging to the *café* now formed part of a separate letting. The only vestiges of the original splendor of the *café* were a plain light-green paper in the shop, and the strong iron bars of the shop-front with their bolts.

When Remonencq first came to the place in 1831, after the Revolution of July, he started with a display of cracked bells, chipped dishes, old iron, superannuated scales, and ancient weights, rendered obsolete by the law establishing new weights and measures—a law which only the state itself infringes; for it sanctions the circulation of one-sou and two-sou pieces coined in the reign of Louis XVI. Then this Auvergnat, of five Auvergnat power, began to purchase kitchen ranges, old picture-frames, old bits of copper and chipped porcelain. Gradually, by dint of filling and emptying and filling and emptying again, the shop began to bear a close resemblance to Nicolet's farces: the character of its contents improved.

The wonderful and infallible scheme adopted by the dealer in old iron—a scheme whose results are patent to the eyes of any lounger sufficiently philosophical to note the arithmetical progression in value of the wares with which these intelligent shops are stocked—was this; tin, argand lamps and earthenware give place to picture-frames and copper; these again make way for porcelain; then, speedily, the shop, that for a brief space figured as a *daubeum,* is metamorphosed into a museum. At last, some fine day the grimy windows are cleaned, the interior of the shop is renovated, the Auvergnat doffs his velvet and his vests, and sports a frock-coat! There is he to be seen, looking like a dragon guarding his treasure. He is surrounded by masterpieces; he has developed into a subtle connoisseur; he has decupled his capital; he is not to be taken in by any artifice; he is perfectly familiar with all the tricks of the trade. There sits the monster like some old dowager surrounded by a bevy of pretty girls, whom she is offering to the highest bidder in the matrimonial market! The beauties, the miracles of art, make no impression whatever on this man, who is, at the same time, coarse and subtle; who bullies the ignorant while calculating what he can make out of them. Turned comedian, he affects a passion for his pictures and marquetries, or pretends to be poor, or invents fictitious purchase prices and offers to show (imaginary) sale notes. He is a very Proteus; in the course of one brief hour he is Jocrisse, Janot, Clown, Mondor, Harpagon, or Nicodemus.

At the beginning of the fourth year after his installation, Remonencq's shop contained some valuable time-pieces, suits of armor, and old pictures, which were protected, when Remonencq himself was

away, by his sister, a stout ugly woman, who, in answer to her brother's summons, had traveled from Auvergne on foot. This sister, La Remonencq (a sort of idiot, with vacant gaze, and dressed like a Japanese idol), never abated a single centime of the prices fixed by her brother. She attended to the household duties also, and solved the apparently insoluble problem—how to live upon the fogs of the Seine. Remonencq and his sister subsisted upon bread and herrings, potato peelings and scraps of vegetables, picked up from the heaps of refuse left by the eating-house keepers near the posts outside their doors. Bread included, the brother and sister lived on less than sixpence a day; and that sixpence La Remonencq earned with her needle and spinning-wheel.

Such was the origin of the business of Remonencq, who had first come to Paris as a commissionaire, and from 1825 to 1831 had executed the commissions of the curiosity-dealers of the Boulevard Beaumarchais and the coppersmiths of the Rue de Lappe. And such is the normal history of many a dealer in curiosities. The Jews, the men of Normandy, of Auvergne and of Savoy—four distinct races—have (one and all) the same instincts, and adopt the same means of growing rich. To spend nothing, to be content with small profits, and to pile interest on profit—*that* is their charter; and *their* charter is more than a mere name.

Remonencq, now reconciled with his former employer, Monistrol, whose trade was with the wholesale dealers, was now accustomed to *chiner*—that is the technical word—in the precinct of Paris, which, as is well known, comprises an area of forty leagues. After being in business for fourteen years he possessed a capital of sixty thousand francs, besides a well-stocked shop. Having no chance custom in the Rue de Normandie, a spot to which he clung on account of the lowness of his rent, he sold his wares to the dealers, contenting himself with moderate profits. All his business was transacted in the Auvergne dialect, known by the name of *charabia*. Remonencq indulged in a day-dream! His day-dream was—to have a shop upon the boulevard. He wanted to become a rich curiosity-dealer, so that he might, some day, sell direct to the amateurs. He was, moreover, a formidable man of business. His face was almost impenetrable; for, in the first place, it was covered—in consequence of his being his own journeyman—with a thick coating composed of iron filings and perspiration; and, in the second, habitual hard work had given to his features that stoical impassiveness which distinguishes the veterans of the war 1799. Physically, Remonencq was a short, thin man, whose little, cold blue eyes were placed in his head like those of a pig, and betokened the concentrated avarice and crafty cunning of the Jew without that superficial humility which conceals his profound contempt for the Christian.

The relations subsisting between the Cibots and the Remonencqs were those of the obliger and the obliged. Madame Cibot, who implicitly believed that the two Auvergnats were exceedingly poor, sold them the leavings of Schmucke and Cibot at prices fabulously low. The Remonencqs paid her two centimes and a half for a pound of dry crusts and bread-crumbs, one centime and a half for a porringer full of potatoes, and so on in proportion. The wily Remonencq was never supposed to do any business on his own account: he always pretended that he was merely Monistrol's agent, and complained that the wealthy dealers barely allowed him to exist; so the Cibots sincerely pitied the Remonencqs. After eleven years' wear, the velvet jacket, velvet waistcoat, and velvet trousers of the Auvergnat still held together; but these three garments, which are characteristic of the men of Auvergne, were covered with patches, inserted, gratuitously, by Cibot. It is clear that all the Jews are not in Israel.

"Aren't you making game of me, Remonencq?" said the portress. "Is it possible as Monsieur Pons can have so large a fortune and lead the life he leads? Why, he hasn't a hundred francs about him!"

"Amateursh are alwaysh like that," replied Remonencq, sententiously.

"So you really n'and truly believe as my gentleman has seven hundred thousand francs' worth of—"

"Yesh, in picturesh alone — he hash one, which, if he wanted fifty shoushand francshs for it, I would find shem, if I had to shtrangle myshelf for shem. You know well zhe little framesh of enameled copper full of red velvet in which zhere are portraitsh. Well, zhen, zhey are enamelsh by Pettitotte, which moncheir, zhe minishter of zhe Government, who wash a druggisht, would give three shoushand francshsh apiecsh—"

"There are thirty of them in the two frames!" exclaimed the portress, with dilating eyes.

"Well shen judgesh of his treashure!"

Madame Cibot, seized with vertigo, turned right-about-face. In a moment, the idea of being remembered in Pons's will, of being placed on an equal footing with all the servant-mistresses, whose annuities had excited so much cupidity throughout the Marais, sprung up in her mind. She pictured herself living in one of the communes on the outskirts of Paris; flaunting it in a villa; looking after her poultry and her garden; and spending her declining years in regal state; she and her poor Cibot, who, like all neglected and uncomprehended angels, deserved so much happiness.

In the abrupt and naïve right-about-face movement of the portress, Remonencq read the certain success of his scheme. The principal difficulty to be surmounted by the *chineur*, is the difficulty of gaining admission to the houses containing the treasures that he is in search of; for the *chineur* is a man who is on the lookout for opportunities. (*Chineur* is derived from the verb *chiner* = to go in search of anything that may turn up, and conclude advantageous bargains with ignorant owners.) No one would credit the number of tricks *a la* Scapin, of Sganarelle dodges, of Dorine-like allurements played off or brought to bear by the *chineur* in order to effect an entrance into the houses of the gentry. They are genuine comedies fit for the stage, and their basis always is, as in this case, the rapacity of servants. For thirty francs in money, or money's worth, the servant will bring about a bargain, out of which the *chineur* will realize a profit of one or two thousand francs. The history of the acquisition of such and such a service of old Sèvres (*pâté tendre*) would exhibit the *chineur* surpassing the Congress of Munster in diplomatic artifice, and the Conventions of Nimeguen, Utrecht, Ryswick and Vienna in the exercise of intelligence. Then, the acting of the *chineur* is much more frank than that of the diplomatist; while, for probing all the profoundest depths of self-interest, the former has at his command means quite as effective as those that ambassadors are at so much pains to invent in order to bring about the rupture of the most closely cemented alliances.

"I have shtirred up Dame Shibot and no mishtake," said Remonencq to his sister, as he saw her resuming her seat upon a chair which had parted with every scrap of its original straw; "and now I will go and conshult zhe only pershon who undershtandsh zhe matter—our Chew, our good Chew who lent ush money at only fifteen per shent!"

Remonencq had read Madame Cibot's inmost thoughts. With women of her stamp to *will* is to *act*. They shrink from nothing that may conduce to the success of their plans; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they pass from the strictest probity to depravity the most profound. Integrity, moreover (like all our other qualities), is of two kinds; there is a negative integrity and a positive integrity. The integrity of a Madame Cibot is of the negative kind: such persons are upright until they have an opportunity of becoming rich. Positive integrity is that which is always knee-deep in temptation, and never succumbs: such is the integrity of the cashier. Through the sluice that had been opened by the Belial-like harangue of the dealer in old iron, a flood of bad designs rushed into the brain and into the heart of this portress. Mounting, or rather—to use the exact word—flying, from the lodge to

the apartments of her "two gentlemen," Dame Cibot made her appearance, with a hypocritical expression of pity on her face, at the threshold of the room in which Pons and Schmucke were moaning in concert. When the latter saw the housekeeper come in, he motioned to her not to breathe, in the presence of the sick man, a single syllable of the doctor's real opinion; for the friend, the excellent German, had read the expression of the doctor's eye. Madame Cibot replied to Schmucke's gesture by a motion of the head that was meant to indicate the deepest sorrow.

"Well, my dear sir, and how do you find yourself?" inquired the dame.

So saying, the portress placed herself at the foot of the bed, with her arms akimbo, and her eyes fixed lovingly upon the invalid; but, oh! what golden scintillations gleamed in those orbs! To the eye of an observer, the glance of a tiger could not have been more terrible.

"Oh! I am very bad!" replied poor Pons; "I don't feel the slightest desire to eat. Oh! the world! the world!" cried he, squeezing the hand of Schmucke, who, seated at the bed's head, was holding Pons's hand in his, and doubtless listening to an account of the origin of Pons's illness.

"Ah! my dear Schmucke, how much better would it have been if I had followed your advice, dined here every day since we foregathered, and given up this society which is now crushing me, as a dung-cart crushes an egg—and for what reason?"

"Come, come, my dear sir, no complaints," said Madame Cibot; "the doctor has told me the truth."

Here Schmucke gave a tug at the portress's gown.

"Well! you *may* get over it, if you are well looked after. Make your mind easy: you have a good friend by your side; and, without wishing to brag, a woman as'll take n'as much care n'of you as a mother takes of her first baby. I pulled Cibot through an illness, when Monsieur Poulain had given him up, and had thrown—as the saying is—the sheet over his nose, and he had been left for dead. Well, you, who n'haven't come to that pass yet, thank God!—though you n'are bad enough, to be sure—you just trust to me; I'll pull you through, without any one's help. Now do be quiet; don't toss yourself about like that." So saying, she drew the bed-clothes over the hands of the invalid. "Come, my little man," pursued she, "Monsieur Schmucke and me'll pass the night there, at your pillow. You will be better cared for than a prince, n'and—besides—you are rich enough not to stint yourself of anything that your disorder requires. I've come to an arrangement with Cibot, which—poor dear man! what on earth would he do without me?—well, I've made him listen to reason, and we n'are, both of us, so fond of you that he's given me leave to spend the night here—and, for a man like him, that's no slight sacrifice, look you! for he loves me now as much as ever he did the first day we were married. I don't know how it is; it must be the lodge; both of us always side by side! Now don't uncover yourself like that," she exclaimed, darting to the head of the bed, and drawing the clothes over Pons's chest. "If you don't behave well and do whatever Monsieur Poulain orders—for Monsieur Poulain's the very image of the good God upon earth, do you see?—I'll have nothing more to do with you: you *must* obey me."

"Yes, Montame Zibod, he will opey you," interposed Schmucke; "for he wants to liff, for de zake of his goot friend Schmucke, I warrant him."

"Above all things, don't irritate yourself," said Madame Cibot; "for your disease will make you n'irritable enough in all conscience without your making matters worse. God sends us our afflictions, my dear good sir; He punishes us for our faults; you've got some sweet little faults to reproach yourself with, no doubt!" (Here the sick man shook his head.) "Oh, come! come! you must have been n'in love when you was young; you've had your frolics: perhaps the fruit of your passion may be knocking about somewhere or other now, without

fire, food or home—you men are such monsters! one day all love, and then—frist!—all's over—no more thought for anything; no, not even while the child's at the breast! Alas, for us poor women!"

"But no one, except Schmucke, and my poor mother, ever loved *me*," said poor Pons, disconsolately.

"Oh! come now, come now, you ain't a saint, you know! You was young once, and you must have been n'a very good-looking young fellow in your time. When you was twenty—considering how good you are—*I* should have been n'in love with you myself!"

"I was always as ugly as a toad!" said Pons, in sheer despair.

"Oh! it's your modesty as makes you say that; for I must say you n'have *that* in your favor; you *n'are* modest!"

"No, no, my dear Madame Cibot; I tell you once more, I was always ugly; I have never been loved—"

"And you want to make me believe that, do you?" said the portress. "You want to make me believe at this time of day, that, at your n'age, you n'are as spotless as the pattern girl of the village! Tell that to the marines! *You*, n'a musician! a theater man! Why, if a woman were to tell me so, I wouldn't believe her—that I wouldn't!"

"Montame Zibod! Montame Zibod! you will egzazberate him," cried Schmucke, seeing that Pons was twisting and wriggling about in his bed like a worm.

"Hold your tongue, you n'also," cried Madame Cibot. "You n'are a pair of old rakes. Plain as you may be, both of you, there's no lid so poor but finds its pot! as the proverb says. Cibot managed to find his way into the good graces of one of the prettiest oyster-girls in Paris—you n'are a deal better-looking than Cibot—and then you n'are such a good soul; come now, you've played your little pranks in your time, and God is punishing you for forsaking your children, like Abraham—"

Here the exhausted sufferer found strength to make another gesture of dissent.

"But make your mind easy; you may live as long as Methuselah, for all that."

"Oh! leave me alone, leave me alone!" cried Pons. "I have never known what it is to be loved. I never had a child; I am alone in the world."

"Really and truly, now?" said the portress; "for you are so kind-hearted that the women—who love a kind heart, mind you, that's what wins 'em—well, it *did* seem to me impossible that in your best days—"

"Take her away," whispered Pons to Schmucke; "she jars my nerves!"

"Ah! well then, Monsieur Schmucke has some children, I'll be bound, you n'are all alike, you old bachelors—"

"*I!*" cried Schmucke, springing to his feet, "*I!*—why—"

"What, do you mean to say that you also have got neither kith nor kin? Why, you two must have come into the world just like a couple of mushrooms."

"Come now, come along with me," replied Schmucke; and, suiting the action to the word, he heroically put his arm round Madame Cibot's waist, and, heedless of her cries, walked her off into the salon.

XIII.

A TREATISE ON THE OCCULT SCIENCES.

"WHAT, would you take advantage of a poor woman, at *your* time of life?" cried Madame Cibot, struggling in Schmucke's arms.

"Don't shout!" said Schmucke.

"You, the best of the two!" continued Madame Cibot. "Ah! I did wrong to talk about love to two n'old men who have never been n'in love," she cried, catching the glare of anger in Schmucke's eyes. "To the rescue! To the rescue! I'm being carried off!"

"You are a vool," said the German. "Come, now, dell me what did de doctor zay?"

"You treat me in this brutal fashion," said Dame Cibot, weeping, but restored to liberty, "*me* as would go through fire

and water to serve you two gentlemen! Ah, well! They say that we come to know what men are by n'experience—how true that is! My poor Cibot would never serve me in this fashion. And me too a-treating you as if you was my own children; for I've no children of my own, and it was only yesterday, as I was a-saying to Cibot: 'My friend, God knew well what He was about in denying us children, for I've two children up there.' *There* now, by the holy cross of God, upon my mother's soul, those were my very words—"

"Yes, yes, but what did the doctor say?" persisted Schmucke, furiously; and, for the first time in his life, he stamped his foot.

"Oh!" replied Madame Cibot, drawing Schmucke into the dining-room, "he said that our dearly beloved duck of a love of an n'invalid would be in great danger of dying unless he was well nursed; but I'm here, in spite of your brutality—for brutal you *n'are*—and so I tell you, *you*, whom I took to be so gentle. So that's your disposition, is it? You'd take advantage of a woman, at your time of life, would you, you big rascal?"

"*I* a rasgal? Don't you know dat I loffe no one put Bons?"

"Well and good; then you'll leave me alone, won't you?" said the dame, smiling at Schmucke. "You'd better, for Cibot would break all the bones in any one's body as tried to take liberties with me."

"Nurse Bons well, my leetle Montame Zibod," returned Schmucke, trying to get hold of Madame Cibot's hand.

"Ah! you would, would you, again?"

"Now lizzen to me; all dat I have shall be yours, if we zave him."

"Very well, I'm going to the apothecary's to get what's wanted—for look'ee here, sir, this illness'll cost money; and how n'are you going to manage?"

"I vill vork; I zhould like Bons to be nursed like a prinze."

"And so he shall, my dear Monsieur Schmucke; and, look you, don't worry yourself about anything; Cibot and I have got two thousand francs laid by; you're welcome to them; I have been spending money of my own on you two for a long time past—*there!*"

"Egzellent woman!" cried Schmucke, wiping his eyes; "what a heart she has!"

"Dry those tears, which do me proud, for *that* is *my* recompense," said Dame Cibot, melodramatically. "I am the most disinterested creature in the world; but don't ye go into the room with tears in your eyes; for that would make Monsieur Pons believe that he's worse nor he really is."

Schmucke, who was touched by this proof of delicacy, now at last succeeded in getting hold of Madame Cibot's hand, and wrung it.

"Spare me!" said the quondam oyster-girl, with a tender glance at Schmucke.

"Bons," said the worthy German, when he had regained the bedroom, "Montame Zibod is ein angel: she is a dalkative angel, I admid; but still she is ein angel."

"You think so, do you?—I have grown suspicious, this last month," replied the invalid, shaking his head. "After so many mishaps as I have had, one ceases to believe, except in God and you!"

"Ged well, and we will all tree liff like gings," said Schmucke.

"Cibot," said the portress to her husband, as, panting for breath, she entered the lodge. "Ah! my friend, our fortune is made. My two gentlemen have no heirs, no love-children, no nothing; what do you say to that? Oh! I'll go to Madame Fontaine's and have my fortune told; so as we may know what our income will be!"

"Wife," said the little tailor, "it's ill waiting for a dead man's shoes."

"Ah! you want to torment me, do you?" said the dame, giving Cibot a friendly tap. "I know's what I know! Monsieur Poulain has given Monsieur Pons up! and we shall be rich; my name will be mentioned in the will; I'll take my oath of it. Ply your needle, and look after your lodge—you won't have to do *that* sort of work very much longer!

We'll retire into the country; we'll go and live at Batignolles. N'a nice house, n'a nice garden, as you'll amuse yourself by looking after; n'I'll have a servant to wait upon me!"

"Well, neighbor, and how are shings going on up yonder?" inquired Remonencq. "Do you know what zhe collection ish worth?"

"No, no, not yet. I don't go that way to work, my good fellow. I began by finding out more n'important things than that—"

"More important shings shan shat?" ejaculated Remonencq. "What can be more important shan shat?"

"Come, come, my imp, leave me to steer my own boat," said the portress, authoritatively.

"But sho mush per shent on this sheven hundred shousand francsh, and you would have enough to keep you in idlenessh for zhe resht of you daysh!"

"Make your mind easy, Daddy Remonencq; when it is necessary to know what all the things the old fellow has got together are worth, we will see—"

The portress, after having gone to the druggist's to get the medicine ordered by Doctor Poulain, put off her consultation with Madame Fontaine until the morrow, thinking that she would find the faculties of the oracles fresher and brighter if she paid her visit the first thing in the morning before any one else was there—for there is often quite a crowd of people at Madame Fontaine's.

After having been, during a period of forty years, the rival of the celebrated Mademoiselle Lenormand, whom she survived, Madame Fontaine was now the oracle of the Marais. It is not easy to conceive what the fortune-teller is to the lower classes of Paris, or how vast is the influence she exercises over the conduct of the uneducated; for cooks, portresses, workingmen, all those denizens of the French metropolis who live upon hope, are in the habit of consulting those privileged beings who possess the strange and unexplained power of reading the future. Faith in the occult sciences is much more widely diffused than men of science, advocates, notaries, doctors, magistrates and philosophers imagine. Some popular instincts are indelible. Of these, that instinct which has been so stupidly termed superstition, is in the very blood of the people, just as it is in the minds of their superiors. There are in Paris several statesmen who consult fortune-tellers.

To the skeptical, judicial astrology—a queer colligation of words by-the-by—is nothing more nor less than the taking advantage of an innate feeling, which is one of the strongest of all human feelings—curiosity. The skeptic, then, entirely denies the existence of any relation whatever between the destiny of an individual and the configuration of that destiny yielded by the seven or eight principal methods which judicial astrology comprises. But the occult sciences have shared the fate of the numerous natural phenomena that freethinkers and materialist philosophers, or, in other words, those who recognize nothing but solid and tangible facts, the outcome of the cucurbite and the scales of modern physics and modern chemistry, have refused to accept; though sciences exist and continue to be practiced; though, since the study of them has, for the last two centuries, been neglected by the most highly gifted minds, those sciences have made no progress.

Now, confining our attention to what may possibly be accomplished by means of divination:—To believe that the antecedent events of a man's life, the secrets known to him and to him only, can be immediately represented by cards, which he shuffles and cuts, and the fortune-teller separates, according to certain mysterious laws, into sundry packets, is absurd; but we must not forget that steam locomotion was condemned as absurd, that aërial navigation is still condemned as absurd; that gunpowder, printing, spectacles, engraving, and the last grand discovery, the daguerreotype, were all condemned as absurd. If any one had gone to Napoleon and told him that a building or a human being is perpetually, and at all times, represented by an atmospheric image; that every object in existence has, suspended in the air, a spectral picture of

itself that can be seen, that can be seized, Napoleon would have shut the man up in Charenton, just as Richelieu found a lodging in Bicetre for Solomon de Caux, when the Norman martyr submitted to him that immense discovery, steam navigation. Yet this is precisely what Daguerre has proved by his invention.

Now, if God has written each man's destiny, upon his physiognomy, in characters that are legible to the eyes of certain clairvoyants—the word physiognomy being taken to mean the expression of the body in its entirety—why should not the hand, which represents human action in its totality, and is the sole instrument of its manifestation, present a synopsis of the whole physiognomy? Hence the science of chiromancy. Does not society imitate God? From the aspect of a man's hand, to foretell to him what the events of his life will be, is not a more extraordinary feat, on the part of him who is endowed with the faculties of the *seer*, than to tell a soldier that he will fight, an advocate that he will plead, a shoemaker that he will make shoes or boots, or a husbandman that he will manure and cultivate the soil. Let us take a striking example. Genius manifests itself so conspicuously that the most ignorant persons, as they walk the streets of Paris, can tell a great artist when they encounter one. He is like a moral sun, whose rays illumine all they meet. Is not the man of feeble intellect recognizable by impressions exactly contrary to those produced by the man of genius? The average man, again, attracts little or no attention. Most persons who observe social life in Paris can tell a man's profession as he approaches them. Nowadays, the mysteries of the witches' Sabbath, so well depicted by the painters of the sixteenth century, are mysteries no longer. The Egyptian women or men—the progenitors of the modern gypsies—that peculiar race which emigrated from the East Indies—simply drugged their clients with hashish. The effects produced by that conserve are quite sufficient to account for the riding on broomsticks, the flying up chimneys, the *real visions*, so to speak, of old women turned into young ones, the furious dances and the delightful music which constituted the vagaries of the reputed devil-worshipers.

At the present day we stand indebted to the occult sciences for so many well-established and authenticated facts that, sooner or later, these sciences will have regular professors, just as chemistry and astronomy now have. It is strange indeed that at a time when we are establishing at Paris professorships of Slavonic and Mantchu, and professorships of literatures, so *unprofessable* as those of the north—which, instead of giving, ought to be receiving lessons, and the professors of which do nothing but repeat eternal articles on Shakespeare and the sixteenth century—it is passing strange that the study of the occult philosophy, one of the glories of the ancient university, has not been restored under the name of Anthropology. In this respect Germany, that land which is at once so mature and so infantile, has outstripped France; for in Germany this science—a science which is much more useful than the various *philosophies*, which are, after all, but one and the same thing—is regularly taught.

That certain beings should have the power of predicting future events from their germinal causes (just as the great inventor detects an industry or a science in some natural phenomenon which eludes the observation of the common herd) is no longer regarded as one of those exorbitant exceptions which set people talking; it is the effect of an unknown faculty which might, in some sort, be deemed the somnambulism of the mind.

If this proposition, on which the various methods of deciphering the future rest, be deemed absurd, the fact itself remains. Observe, that to predict the important events of the future is not a more extraordinary exhibition of power on the part of the seer than to read the past; for, according to the skeptics, the past and the future are alike beyond our ken. But if past events have left their traces behind them, it is but rational to presume that coming events must have their roots

in the present. When a *fortune-teller* has once related to you, with the utmost minuteness of detail, facts in your past career which are known to yourself only, he can certainly foretell the events that existing causes will produce. The moral world is fashioned, so to speak, on the pattern of the physical world; allowing for differences of medium, we may expect to find the same phenomena in both. Accordingly, just as bodies do really project themselves into the atmosphere, and there create those specters which the daguerreotype seizes and fixes as they fly, so do ideas — which are real and operative entities — imprint themselves upon that which we are bound to call the atmosphere of the spiritual world, do there produce effects and do there *spectrally* exist—one is forced to coin phrases to describe phenomena hitherto unnamed—whence it follows that certain exceptionally gifted beings may, without any difficulty, perceive these ideal forms or traces of ideas.

As to the means employed for the production of visions, those means will not be found to enshroud any very profound mystery when it is considered that 'tis the hand of the inquirer himself that arranges the objects by aid of which he is made to represent the accidents of his existence. As a matter of fact, in the material world there is an unbroken sequence of cause and effect. *There* every movement has its corresponding cause; every cause is an integral part of the one great whole; and, consequently, that one great whole is represented by the least movement. Rabelais, the greatest intellect of modern times — Rabelais, that epitome of Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Dante, said, three centuries ago: "Man is a microcosm." Three centuries later, Swedenborg, the great prophet of Sweden, said that the earth was a man. The prophet therefore concurred with the precursor of infidelity in the grandest of all formulæ. As in the life of our planet, so in human life, fate is the arbiter of all things. The smallest, the most trivial, incidents are subject to it. Under its influence, then, great events, grand designs, great thoughts are reflected in the most insignificant actions, and with such fidelity that, if some conspirator shuffle and cut a pack of cards, he will write upon them the secret of his conspiracy in characters legible to the seer who is called gypsy, fortune-teller, charlatan, etc., etc. Once admit the doctrine of fatality, that is to say, the concatenation of causes, judicial astrology follows and becomes—what it formerly was—a vast science; for it involves the possession of that deductive faculty which made Cuvier so great; though that fine genius did not exercise the faculty spontaneously as the seer does, but during studious nights spent in the seclusion of the closet.

Judicial astrology or divination reigned for seven centuries, not, as now, over the poor and the uneducated, but over the highest intellects—over sovereigns, over queens, over the wealthy. Animal magnetism, one of the greatest sciences of antiquity, is an offshoot from the occult sciences, just as chemistry sprung from the alembic of the alchemist. Craniology, physiognomy, neurology, all derive their origin from the occult sciences; and the illustrious creators of these apparently new sciences fell into one mistake only—the mistake of all inventors—that of positively systematizing isolated facts whose generating cause has not yet been discovered. One day the Catholic Church, modern philosophy, and the law united their forces, to proscribe, to persecute, and to ridicule the mysteries of the Cabala and its adepts; and the result was a deplorable lacuna of a hundred years' duration in the study and the sovereignty of the occult sciences. But be that as it may, the people and many intelligent persons, especially women, continue to pay tribute to the mysterious powers of those who can raise the veil that hides the future from our sight. To them these votaries go to purchase hope, courage, fortitude; to purchase that which only religion can give; so that this science is still practiced, though not without certain risks. In these days, thanks to the toleration preached by the encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, the sorcerer is exempt

from torture; he is amenable to the tribunals of correctional police only; nor is he amenable even to them unless he have recourse to fraudulent maneuvers by frightening his customers with intent to extort money from them, which amounts to swindling. Unfortunately swindling, and even greater offenses, often accompany the exercise of this sublime faculty; for the following reasons: The admirable endowments that characterize the seer are often to be found in persons to whom the epithet brute is applied. These brutes are the chosen vessels which God fills with those elixirs which surprise humanity. From the ranks of these brutes come our prophets, such men as Saint Peter and Peter the Hermit.

Whenever thought preserves its integrity, is not split up into fragments, is not dissipated in conversation, in intrigue, in literary work, in scientific fancies, in administrative labors, in efforts to invent, or in military operations, it is ready suddenly to burst forth in rays of prodigious intensity, rays that are latent as the brilliant facets of the diamond lie hid in the uncut stone. Let some particular event occur; the stored intelligence begins to kindle, finds wings to traverse space, and eyes divine that nothing can escape. Yesterday 'twas but a lump of carbon; to-day, transformed by the jet of mysterious fluid that permeates it, it is a scintillating gem. Persons of superior cultivation, persons every side of whose intellect is cut and polished, are unequal (except through one of those miracles in which God sometimes indulges) to the display of this supreme force. Thus the male or female soothsayer is almost always a mendicant of uncultivated intellect, a being of coarse exterior, a stone that has been rolled in the torrents of privation and in the ruts of life, where the only drain upon the vital force has been physical suffering. In fact, the type of the prophet, of the *seer*, is Martin the Laborer, who made Louis XVIII. tremble by telling him a secret which only the king could know; or 'tis a Mademoiselle Lenormand, or (like Madame Fontaine) a cook; an imbecile negress, a herdsman, the constant companion of horned beasts, or a fakir, seated by the side of some pagoda, and developing the mind to the utmost limits of its unknown somnambulistic powers by mortifying the body. (It is in Asia that the heroes of the occult sciences have ever been encountered.) Now such persons—who may, in a certain sense, be said to fulfill the physical and chemical functions of electrical conductors, which are now inert metals, and now channels filled with mysterious fluids—such persons, in their ordinary state, retain their ordinary character, and when, the inspiration having departed, they resume that character, they frequently resort to schemes and practices which subject them to fine and imprisonment, nay, sometimes lead them even into the dock, and thence to the galleys, as in the case of the notorious Balthazar. In conclusion—and what stronger proof of the enormous influence exercised by cartomancy over the minds of the common people could there be?—it depended upon the horoscope cast by Madame Fontaine for Madame Cibot, whether the poor musician should live or die.

Although in a history so extensive and so loaded with details, as a complete history of French society in the nineteenth century must necessarily be, certain repetitions are inevitable, it is superfluous to describe the den of Madame Fontaine, since a description of it has already been given in "Les Comédiens sans le savoir." All that need here be said is that Madame Cibot walked into Madame Fontaine's house in the Rue Vieille du Temple, just as the regular frequenters of the Café Anglais walk into that restaurant to get their breakfast. Madame Cibot, who was a very old customer of Madame Fontaine's, often introduced to her young women and gossips devoured by curiosity.

The old abigail who acted as provost to the fortune-teller threw open the door of the sanctuary without giving her mistress any warning, and exclaimed:

"'Tis Madame Cibot! Step in, madame," she added; "my mistress is alone."

"Well, my darling, and pray what is it brings you here so early?" inquired the sorceress.

Madame Fontaine, who was seventy-eight years old, deserved the appellation sorceress; she resembled one of the Parcæ.

"My blood is completely turned; let me have the grand pack," cried Madame Cibot. "My whole fortune is at stake."

And she proceeded to explain the position in which she stood, and asked for a prediction as to the outcome of her sordid hope.

"You don't know what the grand pack is, do you?" inquired Madame Fontaine, solemnly.

"No; I'm not rich enough to have seen that farce played! A hundred francs, forsooth! Asking your pardon—where should I get a hundred francs from? But to-day the grand pack I must have!"

"I don't often use it, my darling," replied Madame Fontaine. "I only show it to worthy customers on great occasions; and then I get twenty-five louis for it; for it wearies me, it wears me out, look you. The *spirit* seizes me there, in the stomach. It is just like going to the witches' Sabbath, as they used to say."

"But when I tell you, my good Madame Fontaine, that my future n'is involved—"

"Well, well; for *you*, who have brought me so many customers, I will consult the *Spirit*," replied Madame Fontaine, whose decrepit face assumed a terrified expression that was perfectly genuine.

Thereupon she quitted her old and greasy armchair at the corner of the fireplace, and walked to her table, which was covered with a green cloth completely threadbare. On the left side of this table was to be seen an enormous toad asleep, and close behind the toad stood an open cage tenanted by a black hen with ruffled plumage.

"Ashtaroth, my boy, come here," said the crone, as with a knitting-needle she gave the toad a tap on the back, to which he replied with a glance of intelligence. "And you, too, Miss Cleopatra! Attention!" she pursued, tapping the old hen upon its beak. Madame Fontaine then lapsed into meditation and remained motionless for a few seconds; she looked like a corpse; her eyes turned till nothing was seen of them but the whites. Then her whole body stiffened, and she exclaimed, in a sepulchral voice: "I am here!" After having automatically strewed some millet about for Cleopatra, she took her grand pack of cards, shuffled them convulsively, and with a deep-drawn sigh made Madame Cibot cut them. At the sight of this image of death, as, crowned with a greasy turban and wrapped in an unsightly bed-gown, it kept its eyes fixed on the millet-seed which the black hen was pecking at, and summoned Ashtaroth to crawl about over the scattered cards, Madame Cibot felt her back turn cold; she shuddered. 'Tis only firm conviction that can give rise to deep emotions. "To be or not to be" a fundholder; that was the question, as Shakespeare would have said.

XIV.

A CHARACTER FROM ONE OF HOFFMAN'S STORIES.

After the lapse of seven or eight minutes, during which the sorceress opened, and in a hollow voice read from the pages of a conjuring book, examined the seed that was left, and marked the route taken by the retreating toad, she proceeded to decipher the meaning of the cards with her colorless eyes.

"You will succeed," said the crone; "although nothing will turn out as you expect. You will have a great deal to do. But you will reap the fruit of your labors. You will behave very badly; but it will be with you as it is with all those who, being brought into contact with sick folks, are on the lookout for a legacy. You will be aided in your evil work by considerable personages. Later on, you will repent, in the agonies of death; for you will die, murdered by two escaped convicts (one of them, a little man with red hair, and the other, an old man quite bald) for the sake

of the fortune you will be supposed to have, by the people of the village to which you will retire with your second husband. Now, my daughter, you may pursue your course or remain quiet, as you please."

Thereupon the internal excitement that had kindled torches in the hollow eyes of the skeleton that was outwardly so cold, subsided. When the horoscope had been announced, Madame Fontaine experienced a kind of bewilderment, and looked exactly like an awakened somnambulist. She gazed all round her, with an air of astonishment; then, recognizing Madame Cibot, she seemed surprised to find her a prey to the horror depicted in her features.

"Well, my daughter," said the sorceress, in a voice quite different from that which she had used when prophesying, "are you satisfied?"

Madame Cibot looked with a dazed expression at the inquirer, and found herself unable to reply.

"Ah! you *would* have the grand pack; I treated you as an old acquaintance. Give me a hundred francs; but—"

"Cibot! die!" cried the portress.

"I have told you some terrible things, then?" said Madame Fontaine, with the utmost ingenuousness.

"I should *think* so!" said Madame Cibot, taking from her pocket a hundred francs and laying them on the table. "To die, murdered!"

"Ah! you see, you *would* have the grand pack. But take comfort; the people whom the cards kill do not always die."

"But is it possible, Mistress Fontaine?"

"Oh! my little beauty, *I* know nothing about the matter! You wished to knock at the door of the future; I merely pulled the string, that's all; and *he* came!"

"*He*, who's *he?*" asked Madame Cibot.

"Why, the *Spirit*, of course," replied the sorceress, impatiently.

"Adieu, Mistress Fontaine!" cried the portress. "Little did I know what the grand pack was; you have thoroughly frightened me, indeed you n'have!"

"Mistress doesn't put herself into that condition twice a month," said the servant, as she accompanied the portress to the landing. "She would die of the exertion; it tires her so much. Now she will eat a dish of cutlets and sleep for three hours."

As Madame Cibot pursued her way tuhrogh the streets, she did what all those who seek advice of any kind invariably do; she believed all that told in her favor, and doubted the reality of the predicted misfortunes. On the morrow, fortified in her resolutions, she bethought her to move heaven and earth in order that she might grow rich by securing the gift of a portion of the Pons Museum. To devise such measures as might conduce to the success of her scheme, was, for a time, her only thought. The phenomenon which we explained but now, namely, the concentration of the mental faculties in common people, who not being called upon, as their betters are, for the daily expenditure of their intellectual capital, find it intact when that powerful engine—*the fixed idea*—begins to sway their spirits, now, manifested itself in a remarkable manner in the conduct of Madame Cibot. Just as *the fixed idea* produces marvelous escapes and miracles of sentiment, so cupidity, working on the brain of this portress, rendered her as potent as a Nucingen on the verge of bankruptcy, as acute, beneath her apparent stupidity, as the seductive La Palferine.

Some days after her interview with Madame Fontaine, seeing Remonencq engaged in opening his shop at about seven o'clock in the morning, she sidled up to him and said to him:

"What are we to do in order to find out the value of the things up yonder in my gentlemen's rooms?"

"Oh! that's easy enough," said the curiosity-dealer in that revolting *patois*, the reproduction of which is not essential to the clearness of the narrative; "if you will deal frankly with me, I will name a valuer, a very honest man, who will know what the pictures are worth, almost to a penny."

"Who's that?"

"Monsieur Magus, a Jew, who never

does any business now except by way of amusement."

Elie Magus, whose name is so well known in the "Comédie Humaine" that it is unnecessary to describe him, had retired from the business of dealer in pictures and curiosities, and, in his capacity of tradesman, had followed in the footsteps of Pons the amateur. Those celebrated valuers, the late Henry, Messieurs Pigeot and Moret, Theret, Georges and Roehn—in short, the experts of the Museum—were mere children as compared with Elie Magus, who could smell a *chef-d'œuvre* under a coating of dirt a hundred years old, and knew all the schools of painting and the style of every painter.

This Jew, who had come to Paris from Bordeaux, had given up business in 1835, without giving up his poverty-stricken exterior. This he retained faithful, as most Jews are, to the traditions of the race. During the Middle Ages, the Jews, in order to divert suspicion, were compelled to be perpetually complaining, whining, and pleading poverty; and these exploded necessities became (as always happens) a popular instinct, an endemic vice. Elie Magus, by dint of buying and selling diamonds, bartering pictures and lace, choice curiosities and enamels, fine sculpture and old jewelry, had secretly amassed a large fortune in this branch of trade, which is now so extensively carried on. In fact, the number of dealers in Paris is now ten times as large as it was twenty years ago. Paris is the city in which all the curiosities in the world foregather. As to pictures, there are only three cities in which they are sold—Rome, London, and Paris.

Elie Magus dwelt in the Chaussee des Minimes, a street leading to the Place Royale. In that street, whose magnitude belies its name, he owned an old mansion which he had bought in 1831 for an old song, as the saying is. This magnificent edifice contained a most luxurious suite of rooms which had been fitted up during the Louis Quinze period. In fact, it was the old Hotel de Maulincourt. It had been built by that celebrated president of the Cour des Aides, and had escaped destruction during the Revolution by reason of its position. Now since, in defiance of the laws of Israel, the old Jew had made up his mind to turn landowner, you may be sure that he had excellent reasons for his conduct. The old man had done what we all do in our declining years; he had developed a passion, which had grown into a mania. Although he was as great a miser as his deceased friend Gobseck, he allowed himself to become infected with a passionate admiration for the masterpieces in which he dealt; but his taste for them had grown more and more refined and fastidious, until it had become one of those passions which are permitted only to sovereigns who are wealthy and love the Arts. Just as the second king of Prussia cared little for a grenadier under six feet high, and would spend enormous sums in order to add to his animated museum of grenadiers a specimen who reached that standard, so the enthusiasm of the retired picture-dealer was aroused only by the faultless specimens of the painter's art—specimens that had never been retouched by an inferior hand, and were first-rate of their kind. Elie Magus accordingly went to every important sale, attended every mart, and traveled all over Europe. This gold-enamored, ice-cold heart warmed up on beholding a masterpiece, just as an exhausted voluptuary kindles at the sight of a peerless beauty, and devotes himself to the discovery of such paragons. This Don Juan of the picture-gallery, this idolator of the ideal, found in his enthusiastic admiration joys superior to those that the contemplation of gold yields to the miser. Elie Magus lived in a seraglio of beautiful pictures!

These masterpieces were lodged as befits the children of princes. In the old Hotel de Maulincourt they occupied the whole of the first story, which Elie Magus had caused to be restored with remarkable splendor! The window-curtains were of the finest Venetian gold brocade; the most magnificent products of the Savonnerie carpeted the floors. The pictures, to the number of about one hundred, were inclosed in the most splendid frames,

which had been tastefully regilded by the only conscientious gilder that Elie could find in all Paris—Servais, to wit, whom the old Jew had instructed in the art of gilding with English gold (which is infinitely superior to that of the French goldbeaters). Servais is, as a gilder, what Thouvenin was as a book-binder — an artist who loves his craft. The windows of this first floor were protected by shutters lined with sheet iron. Magus himself occupied a couple of attics on the second floor—two meanly furnished rooms, encumbered with his rags, and redolent of Jewish habits; for as the commencement of his life had been, even so was its close.

On the ground-floor, which was entirely taken up by the pictures that the Jew still continued to barter, and by the packing-cases in which they had been sent from abroad, there was a vast studio wherein Moret, the most skillful of our picture cleaners—a man who ought to be employed by the authorities of the Museum —spent almost the whole of his time in working for Magus. On this floor also were the apartments of Elie's daughter, the child of his old age, a Jewess who was beautiful with the beauty common to all Jewesses in whose features the pure Asiatic type is reproduced. Noemi was under the protecting care of two female servants, both of whom were fanatics, and of Jewish extraction. A Polish Jew named Abramko, who, through some extraordinary freak of fortune, had been compromised by the course of events in Poland, and had been saved by Elie Magus, as a matter of speculation, was Noemi's advanced guard. This Abramko, the porter of this silent, drear, and desolate abode, occupied a lodge garrisoned by three extremely ferocious dogs, one of which was a Newfoundland, another a Pyrenean dog, and the third an English bull-dog.

The Jew, who used to quit his home without any feeling of uneasiness, to sleep soundly and dread no attack, either upon his daughter—his chief treasure—or upon his pictures, or upon his gold, had good reasons for this freedom from anxiety which was based upon the following deeply planned precautions: Abramko's wages were raised eight pounds every year; he was not to receive a single doit at the death of Magus, who was bringing him up to be the money-lender of the neighborhood; he never opened the door to any caller without subjecting him to a preliminary scrutiny through a grated window. Abramko, a man of herculean build, worshiped Magus as Sancho Panza worshiped Don Quixote. The dogs were chained up during the day, but at nightfall Abramko unchained them; whereupon, in accordance with the cunning calculations of the Jew, one of them would station himself in the garden, at the foot of a post, on the top of which a bit of meat was hooked; the second would plant himself in the court at the foot of a similar post, and the third in the large salon on the ground-floor. The reader will at once perceive that these dogs, whose untutored instinct led them to guard the house, were themselves guarded by their hunger. The fairest female of their race would not have seduced them from their posts at the foot of their greased poles, which they did not quit to sniff at anything. Did a stranger present himself, the three dogs forthwith imagined that he had designs upon their food, the food which was never lowered to them until Abramko rose in the morning. This infernal submissiveness on the part of the dogs was attended by immense advantages. They never barked; the genius of Magus had promoted them to the rank of savages; they had become as sullenly taciturn as Mohicans. Now mark the result. One day certain malefactors, encouraged by the prevailing silence, took it into their heads that they would have little difficulty in *cleaning out* the cash-box of the Jew. The one who was selected to lead the attack mounted the garden wall, and was in the act of descending, when the bull-dog, who had heard the whole proceeding without, up to that point, interfering, no sooner found the gentleman's foot within reach of his canine jaws than he bit it clean off and eat it. The robber had courage enough to recross the wall and walk upon the bleeding stump until he

reached his comrades, and, falling fainting into their arms, was by them borne off. This charming little episode of "The Parisian Nights" was duly chronicled in the "Gazette des Tribunaux," under the head of "Doings in Paris," and was taken for a *puff*.

Magus, who was now seventy-five years of age, might well live to be a hundred. Rich as he was, he lived as the Remonencqs lived. Three thousand francs covered his annual expenses, including his extravagances on behalf of his daughter. The old man led a life of the severest regularity. He rose with the sun, and made his breakfast on bread rubbed with garlic. That carried him on till the dinner hour. He always dined at home, and with monastic frugality. The interval between his rising and noon was employed by the monomaniac in pacing up and down the apartment that contained his masterpieces. There he dusted everything, furniture as well as pictures; and never did his admiration flag. Then he would go down to his daughter's room, and having drunk deep of the pleasures of paternity, would set off on his rambles through Paris, attend sales, visit exhibitions, and so forth. When he stumbled on a masterpiece, in a state which satisfied his self-imposed conditions, the blood began to course more quickly through his veins; here was a cunning stroke of business to be done, a transaction to be carried through, a battle of Marengo to be gained! In order to secure this new sultana for a moderate sum he would heap artifice on artifice. Magus had his own private map of Europe—a map on which the local habitation of every masterpiece is marked—and he instructed his co-religionists in each locality to keep a watchful eye upon the business on his behalf—for a consideration. If Magus took a world of trouble how vast was his reward!

For it is Magus who possesses the two lost pictures of Raphael which the Raphaelites have sought with so much persistence; Magus is the owner of the original portrait of Giorgione's mistress—the woman for whose sake the artist died; and the so-called originals are but copies of this illustrious picture which, in Magus's opinion, is worth no less than five hundred thousand francs. Magus is the owner of Titian's masterpiece, "The Burial of Christ," a picture that was painted for Charles V., and sent by the great artist to the great emperor accompanied by a letter which is throughout in Titian's handwriting, and is gummed to the bottom of the picture. Magus possesses the original painting, the rough sketch from which all the portraits of Philip II. were taken. His other pictures, to the number of ninety-seven, are all of similar rank and distinction. So that Magus laughs to scorn our poor Museum, ravaged as it is by the solar rays which, passing through windows that act like so many lenses, corrode the finest pictures. The only admissible method of lighting a picture-gallery is to light it from the ceiling. With his own hand did Magus open and close the shutters of his museum, bestowing as much care upon it as he bestowed upon his other idol—his daughter. Ah! full well did the old picture-maniac understand the laws that govern paintings! According to him, masterpieces had a life peculiar to themselves; they changed with the changing hour; their beauty depended on the light that shone upon them; the old man talked about his pictures as the Dutch used to talk about their tulips, and would pay a visit to such and such a painting at the moment when it was to be seen in all its glory under the influence of a clear bright sky.

Clad in a wretched little coat, a silk waistcoat of ten years' standing, and a greasy pair of trousers, this little old man with the bald head, the hollow cheeks, the quivering beard of prickly white, the pointed threatening chin, the toothless mouth, eye bright as that of his own dogs, thin bony hands, obelisk-nose, and cold and wrinkled skin, as he stood smiling at these beautiful creations of genius, was a living picture among all those inanimate pictures. A Jew in the midst of three millions of money will ever be one of the finest spectacles in the repertory of humanity. Our great actor Robert Medal, sublime as he is, cannot

soar to that poetic height! There are more of such *originals* as Magus in Paris than in any other city in the world. The *eccentricities* of London always wind up by becoming disgusted with the objects of their adoration, just as they become disgusted with life; while your Parisian monomaniac, on the contrary, dwells with his chimera in a happy state of intellectual communion. At Paris you will encounter many a Pons and many an Elie Magus, most shabbily dressed creatures, with noses (like that of the permanent secretary of the French Academy) pointing due west, and who seem to be without cares and without sensations, who never look at a woman or a shop, walk about, so to speak, hap-hazard, with nothing in their pockets, and—to all outward seeming—nothing in their pates. "To what tribe of Parisian can these folks belong?" you ask yourself. Well, these men are millionaires, collectors, the most impassioned people in the world, people who are quite capable of pushing forward into the miry region of the police-court—as Elie Magus actually did one fine day, in Germany—in their eagerness to possess a cup, a picture, or some rare coin.

Such then was the expert to whom Madame Cibot was, with much mystery, conducted by Remonencq, who was in the habit of consulting Elie Magus whenever they met on the boulevard, and to whom the Jew, well knowing the trustworthiness of the former commissionaire, had, on sundry occasions, advanced money through Abramko. The Chaussee des Minimes being only a few steps from the Rue de Normandie, the two accomplices in the stroke of business to be done, reached their destination in ten minutes.

"You are going to see the wealthiest retired curiosity-dealer and the greatest connoisseur in Paris," said Remonencq to the lady.

Madame Cibot was astounded at finding herself in the presence of a little old man, dressed in a great-coat too much worn to be worthy of Cibot's amending hand, and occupied in watching his picture-restorer, a painter, who was engaged in touching up a picture in a bare room on the vast ground-floor which we have mentioned. When she caught the glance of those eyes, which were as full of calculating mischief as those of a cat, she tremblod.

"What do you want, Remonencq?" inquired the Jew.

"I want some pictures valued: and you are the only person in Paris who can tell a poor coppersmith like me what he may venture to give for them when he has not hundreds and thousands as you have."

"Where are they?" asked Elie Magus.

"This is the portress of the house: she is the gentleman's housekeeper, and I have made arrangements with her—"

"What is the name of the owner of the pictures?"

"Monsieur Pons," said Madame Cibot.

"I don't know him," replied Magus, assuming an ingenuous air, and with his own foot gently pressing that of his picture-cleaner.

Moret, who, being a painter, knew the value of the Pons Museum, had bruskly raised his head. This little bit of by-play could have been hazarded only in the presence of persons such as Remonencq and Madame Cibot. The Jew, using his eyes as a gold-weigher uses his scales, had appraised the moral value of the portress at a glance. Both she and her accomplice were necessarily ignorant of the fact that the worthy Pons and Magus had often taken the length of each other's claws. In fact, these two ferocious amateurs were envious of each other. The old Jew had, accordingly, just experienced a sort of mental dazzlement. He had never hoped to penetrate into so well-guarded a harem. The Pons Museum was the only museum in Paris that could be compared with that of Magus. The same idea that had occurred to Pons had occurred to Magus; only it occurred to him twenty years later. But as being that hybrid, a tradesman-amateur, he, like the late Dusommerard, had been excluded from the Pons Museum. Pons and Magus were both imbued with the same jealous feeling: both of them shunned that publicity which the owners

of collections generally court. To be enabled to examine the gallery of the poor musician afforded Elie Magus as much delight as a lover of the fair sex would derive from a surreptitious visit to the boudoir in which a jealous friend had sequestered a beautiful mistress.

The great respect evinced by Remonencq for this strange personage, and the spell that all genuine power—even though it be mysterious—exerts, rendered Madame Cibot supple and submissive: she dropped the autocratic tone that she adopted in the lodge in her intercourse with her two gentlemen and with the other occupants of the house, accepted Magus's conditions, and promised to introduce him into the Pons Museum that very day. Now, this was admitting the enemy into the very citadel itself; this was equivalent to plunging a dagger into the heart of Pons, who, for ten years past, had laid upon Madame Cibot a strict injunction not to allow any one whomsoever to enter his apartments, and had always taken his keys with him when he went out; and this injunction Madame Cibot had obeyed so long as she shared the opinions of Schmucke in the matter of bric-à-brac. Indeed the worthy Schmucke, by treating all these magnificent works as mere gewgaws and bewailing Pons's mania, had instilled his own contempt for the old rubbish into the mind of the portress, and thus secured the Pons Museum from invasion for many a year.

Since Pons had been confined to his bed, Schmucke had acted as his deputy, both at the theater and in the schools that Pons attended. The poor German, who saw his friend only in the morning and at dinner-time, tried to meet all demands by keeping together both Pons's connection and his own. But the task exhausted all the old man's energies, diminished as they were by his overwhelming grief. Seeing the poor man so dejected, the pupils and the theatrical folk—to all of whom Schmucke had communicated the fact of Pons's illness—asked him about the health of the patient; and so profound was the sorrow of the old pianist that even the indifferent assumed that affectation of concern which is the Parisian's tribute to capital catastrophes.

As with Pons so with Schmucke, the vital principle itself was attacked. Nor was it only from his own pangs that Schmucke suffered: he suffered also with his suffering friend. His mind was so full on the subject that he would talk about Pons during a full half of the time that should have been devoted to the lesson he was giving; he would so naïvely break off in the middle of an explanation to ask himself how his friend was faring, that his youthful pupil would find herself listening to a disquisition on Pons's ailments. In the interval between two lessons, Schmucke would rush off to the Rue de Normandie to spend a quarter of an hour by the bedside of his friend. Scared at the emptiness of the joint cash-box, and alarmed by Madame Cibot, who during the last fortnight had been doing her best to swell the expenses of the sick-room, the old pianist found that a new-born courage, for which he would never have given himself credit, enabled him to rise superior to his troubles. Now, for the first time in the whole course of his career, he wanted to get money; in order that there might be no dearth of it at home. When one of his young lady pupils, who felt a genuine pity for the two friends, asked Schmucke how he could bear to leave Pons all alone, he replied with the sublime simplicity of the dupe: "Matemoiselle, we have Montame Zibod! ein treasure! ein bearl! Bons is gared for as if he were ein brinze!" Now, directly Schmucke was engaged in trotting from street to street, Dame Cibot became mistress of the apartments and the invalid. How was it possible for Pons, who had eaten nothing for a fortnight, who was lying prostrate in his bed, who was so feeble that, whenever the bed required making, Madame Cibot was obliged to raise him in her arms and place him in an easy-chair—how was it possible for Pons to keep a watchful eye upon that self-styled guardian angel? As a matter of course, Dame Cibot paid her visit to Elie Magus while Schmucke was at breakfast.

She was back again in time to witness the parting between Schmucke and the patient; for since the revelation of Pons's potential wealth, Dame Cibot had stuck closely to her old bachelor; she brooded over him. Ensconced in a snug arm-chair at the foot of the bed, she treated Pons—by way of amusing him—to a flood of gossip such as women of her stamp excel in. She had grown coaxing, gentle, attentive, anxious, and had thus, with Machiavellian skill, obtained an influence over Pons's mind, as we shall see.

XV.

PRATTLE AND POLITICS OF OLD PORTRESSES.

SCARED by the prediction that was the outcome of Madame Fontaine's manipulation of the grand pack, Dame Cibot had entered into a compact with herself to secure the object that she had in view—namely, a legacy under Pons's will—by gentle measures, and without resorting to overt acts of villainy. During a period of ten years she had remained ignorant of the value of the Pons Museum, and now, finding that the accumulated attachment, integrity, and disinterestedness which she had displayed during those years was standing to her credit, she resolved to discount this magnificent security. Since the day when Remonencq, by using a phrase that was eloquent of gold, had hatched in the heart of this woman a serpent which had lain there in its shell for five-and-twenty years—namely, the desire to be rich—she had nourished the reptile on all the evil leaven which lurks in the inmost recesses of the human soul. We shall now see how she proceeded to carry out the counsel which the serpent was hissing into her ear.

"Well! and has our cherub *drank* plenty of stuff? Is he any better?" she inquired of Schmucke.

"He is not going on well, not well, my tear Montame Zibod," replied the German, as he wiped away a tear.

"Bah! You frighten yourself needlessly, my dear sir. You must take things as they come. If Cibot were actually at the point of death, I shouldn't be so downcast as you are. Come! our cherub has a good constitution; and then, you see, it seems he's led a prudent life; you don't know what an age people as have lived prudently run to. He *is* very ill, that's for certain; but, with the care n'I take of him, I shall manage to pull him round. So make your mind easy, and go and see after your business; I'll keep him company and see as he drinks his quarts of barley-water."

"If it were nod for you, I should tie of anxiety," said Schmucke, pressing the hand of his worthy housekeeper in a manner that was intended to intimate his trust in her; whereupon Madame Cibot went into Pons's bedroom wiping her eyes.

"What is the matter, Madame Cibot?" said Pons.

"It's Monsieur Schmucke as upsets me," said the portress. "He cries about you as if you were a dead man! Now, though true it is that you're not well, you're not so bad that people need cry over you; but still I feel it very much. My God! what a fool I am to be so fond of people and to care more for you than I do for Cibot! For, after all, you're nothing to *me;* we're not any ways related to each other—except through the first woman. Well, I vow and declare, your illness has given me quite a turn; upon my word and honor it has. I'd stand to have my hand cut off—my left hand, of course—here under your very nose if I could see you a-coming and a-going, a-eating and a-cheating of the dealers as you've been n'accustomed to. If I'd ha' had a child I think I should have loved it n'as I love you; *there* now! Come, do drink, my pet; come now, a good glassful. Will you drink, monsieur? The first thing Monsieur Poulain said was: 'If Monsieur Pons don't want to go to Pere-Lachaise, he must drink as many pailfuls of water as an Auvergnat sells in a day.' So come now, drink!"

"But, my good Cibot, I *am* drinking;

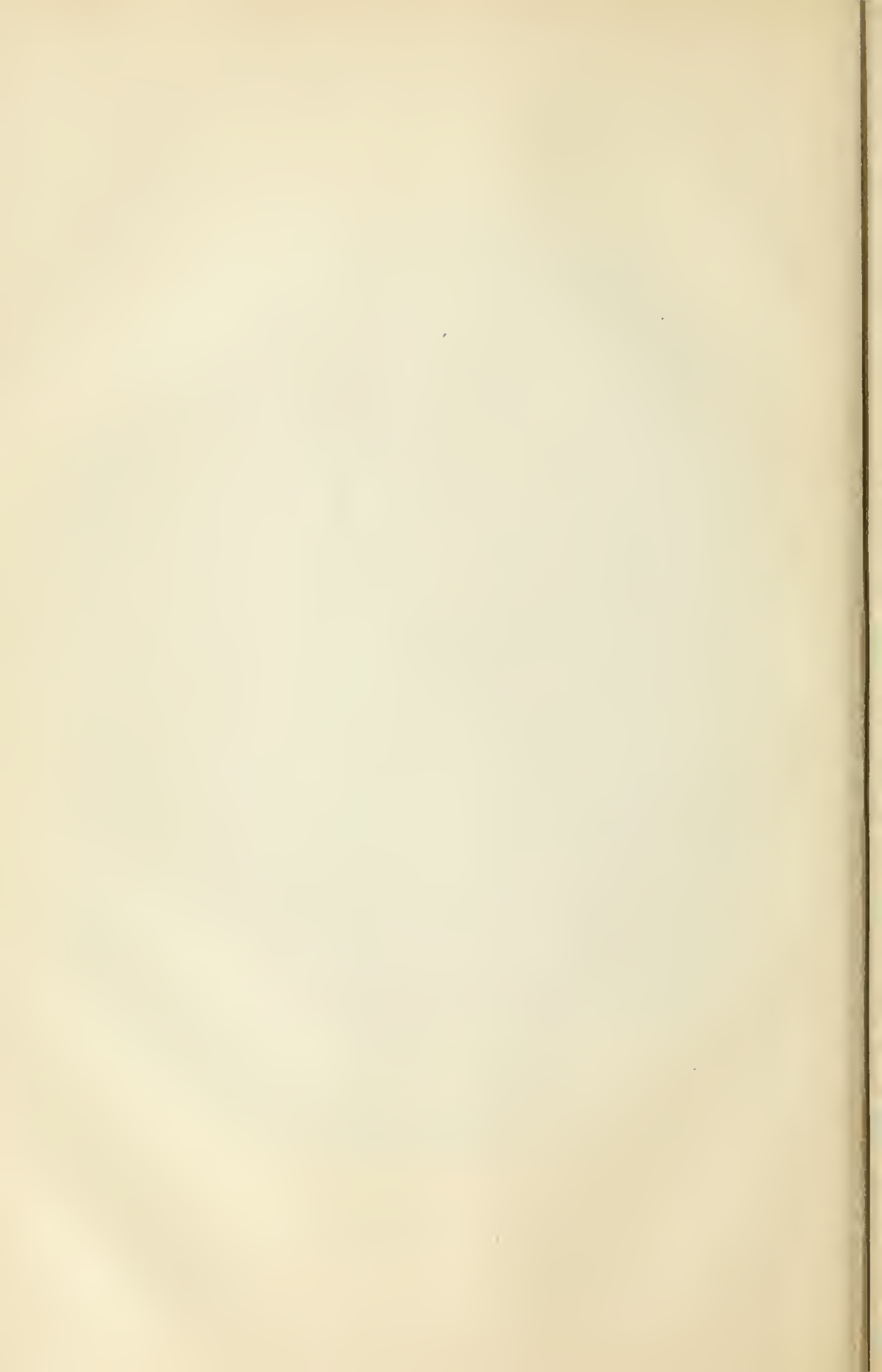
I drink till my stomach is literally drowned."

"There, that's right," said the portress, taking the empty glass. "You'll get well if you do that! Monsieur Poulain had a patient like you as was deserted by his children, and hadn't no one to look after him, and he died of this same complaint, and all for the want of drinking! (So, you see, you must drink, my duck!) Which, they buried him, two months agone! Do you know that if you was to die, my dear sir, you'd take that worthy man, Monsieur Schmucke, with you; 'pon my word and honor, he's just like a child, he is. Ah! how he does love you, the dear lamb! No! no woman loves a man so much as that. He's quite lost all relish for his victuals, and he's grown that thin within the last fortnight, ay, as thin as *you* are, and you're naught but skin and bone. It makes me feel quite jealous, for I'm very fond of you myself; though I haven't come to that yet; I haven't lost my n'appetite; n'on the contrary, quite the reverse. Forced as I am to keep on a-running up and downstairs, my legs get so tired that of an evening I sink down just like a lump o' lead. Then there's that there poor Cibot of mine, don't I neglect him for your sake, which Mademoiselle Remonencq gets him his victuals, which he grumbles at me because they aren't nice. Well, then, I says to him, as how we ought to put up with things for the sake of other folks, and that you're too ill to be left alone. In the first place, you're not well enough to do without a nurse! But you don't catch me allowing a nurse to come in here, when I've looked after you and been your housekeeper myself these ten years. And they all so fond of their stomachs, too, which they eat you out of house and home, and want wine and sugar and their foot-warmers and their comforts. And then there they rob their patients unless their patients put them down for something in their wills. Just put a nurse in here to-day and see whether there wouldn't be a picture or something else missing to-morrow—"

"Oh! Madame Cibot," cried Pons, quite beside himself; "don't leave me! Don't let anything be touched!"

"Here I am," said Dame Cibot; "and here I'll stop, as long as I've got any strength left. Make your mind easy! Didn't Monsieur Poulain, who's got an eye on your treasures may be, didn't he want to get a nurse for you? Ah! didn't I just give him a look, that's all? 'There's no one but me as'll suit Monsieur Pons,' I says to him; 'he knows my ways as I know his'n.' And with that he held his tongue. But a nurse; why, them nurses are all of 'em thieves! How I hates them women! I'll just show you now what schemers they are. Well, then, an old gentleman—now mark you, it was Monsieur Poulain as told me this—well, a Madame Sabatier, a woman of thirty-six, who once sold slippers at the palace—you must remember the shop gallery at the palace that has been pulled down?" (Pons nodded his head by way of assent.) "Well, this woman then didn't get on well along of her husband, which he drunk everything, and died of spontaneous imbustion; well, she was a handsome woman in her time, no doubt—one must tell the truth, you know—but *that* did her no good; though it *is* said that she had friends among the advocates. Well, as I was a-saying, when she came to grief she took to monthly nursing; yes, sir, and she lives in the Rue Barre du Bec. Well, then, you must know, she went out to nurse an n'old gentleman, who'n, no offense to you, sir, had something the matter with his lurinary liver, and they used to sound him, just for all the world as if he'd been a n'artesian well; which he wanted so much waiting on, that she was used to sleep on a folding-bed in his room. Would you believe it now? But no doubt you'll tell me: 'Men have no respect for anything or anybody, they're so selfish!' Well, as she was a-talking to him—for she was always there, you understand; she cheered him up, told him stories, made him prattle, just like you and me are jabbering away now; well, she finds out as his nephews—for the patient had some nephews—were regular monsters as caused him a lot of worry, and—to cut

SCHMUCKE AND PONS

"The flaneurs of the quarter had nick-named them 'The Pair of Nut-Crackers.'"

a long tale short—as it was his nephews as was the cause of his illness.

"Well, my dear sir, she saved that 'ere gentleman and became his wife, and they have a child now as is superb, and which Madame Bordevin, what keeps the butcher's shop in the Rue Charlot, which she's related to the lady, stood god-mother. There's luck for you, now! As for me, I'm married; but I haven't got no child, and I must say it's all Cibot's fault, for he's overfond of me; for if I wished—but I'll say no more. What on earth would have become of us, me and my Cibot, if we'd had a family, us as haven't a halfpenny that we can call our own, n'after thirty years' honesty, my dear sir? But what consoles me is as I haven't a farthing of any one else's money; I've never wronged nobody. Look here, now, let's just suppose, which I'm free to say it, seeing as how you'll be upon your pegs again in six weeks' time, a-sauntering along the boulevards; well, then, we'll suppose as you puts me down for something in your will; well, I should never rest till I'd found out your lawful heirs so as I might give it back to them; I've such a horror of money as I don't earn by the sweat of my brow. You'll say to me, no doubt: 'Don't you go for to torment yourself like that, Mistress Cibot; you've worked hard for it; you've looked after them two gentlemen n'as if they'd been your own children; you've saved 'em as much as a thousand francs a year.' For do you know, sir, there's many a cook as 'ud have laid by a snug ten thousand francs by this time, if they'd stood in my shoes. 'Well, then, sure enough, it's only fair as this good gentleman *should* leave you a little annuity.' I'm only a-supposing as some one was to say that to me, you know. Well, no; for my part, I'm quite disinterested; I *can't* understand how there can be such things as women as do good with an eye to the main chance. Why, *that* isn't doing good at all; is it, my dear sir? It's true as I don't go to church; I've no time to go; but my conscience tells me what it's right to do, for all that. Now, don't go for to toss yourself about like that, my kitten! Don't scratch yourself! My God, how yellow you are, to be sure; why, you're that yellow you're wellnigh brown. What a queer thing it is that in twenty days folks should turn as yellow as a lemon! Well, as I was a-saying, honesty is the poor man's store! one *must* have *something* to bless themselves with! Well, now, even supposing as the worst came to the worst, I should be the very first to tell you as you ought to give all your belongings to Monsieur Schmucke. It's your duty so to do; for he's your whole family all in one! Ah! and he loves you too, *he* does, just as a dog loves his master."

"Oh, yes!" said Pons. "He is the only person who has ever loved me in the whole course of my life—"

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Dame Cibot. "That's not at all pretty of you. What about me? Don't *I* love you?"

"I don't say that, my dear Madame Cibot."

"There now, aren't you just a-going for to treat me as if I was n'a mere servant, a common cook, just as if I'd no feelings whatever? Oh! my God! Work yourself fit to split for a couple of old fellows for eleven years! Do naught but look after their comforts!—which I ransacked ten green-grocers' shops and got myself becalled all sorts of names just to get you good *fromage de Brie*, which I went all the way to the market to get you fresh butter; yes, and you may take such care of everything; which in all these ten years I haven't so much as broken or chipped a single thing; yes, and you may be like a mother is to her children!—and what does it all come to? Why! you hears a 'My dear Madame Cibot,' which just shows you as there isn't one spark of feeling for you in the buzzom of the old gentleman as you've been a nursing like you'd nurse the son of a king: for the little king of Rome was never looked after as you've been—will you make me a bet that he was as well looked after as you are?—well, the proof is that he died in the very prime of his life. Look you, sir, you aren't just—you're ungrateful! just because I'm nothing but a poor portress. Ah! my God! even you

too think as we're not a bit better than dogs—"

"But, my dear Madame Cibot—"

"Come, now, you're a learned man; now just explain to me how 'tis us poor porter-folk are treated like that; that no one gives us credit for having any feelings at all, and that we're despised at a time when there's so much talk about equality. Ain't I as good as any other woman? *Me* as was one of the prettiest women in Paris, and as was called the handsome oyster girl, and received a declaration of love seven or eight times in the course of the day? Ay, and if I cared so to do, even now! Why, look you, sir; you know that dwarf of an old iron-dealer what lives near the entrance-gate; well, if I were a widow, which, in course, is n'only a supposition, he'd marry me with his eyes shut; for he's opened them so wide at me that he's never tired of saying to me: 'Oh! what lovely arms you've got, Madame Cibot. I dreamed, only last night, that they was bread and that I was butter spread upon 'em.' Look here, sir; there's a pair of arms for you!" And suiting the action to the word, Madame Cibot turned up her sleeve, and displayed the finest arm that could possibly be seen, an arm that was as white and fresh as the hand itself was red and wrinkled—a plump, round, dimpled arm, which, denuded of its case of common merino, as a sword is drawn from its scabbard, was enough to dazzle Pons, who scarcely ventured to do more than glance at it—"Yes," pursued the dame, "and an arm as has opened as many hearts as my knife did oysters! Well, that arm belongs to Cibot; and I've done wrong to neglect the poor dear man, who'd throw himself over a precipidge at the first word as I uttered, for your sake, monsieur, *you* as calls me my dear Madame Cibot, when I'd do unpossibilities for you—"

"But do listen to me," said the sick man; "I can't call you my mother or my wife—"

"No, never again, as long as I lives, nor as long as I breathe, will I get attached to nobody—"

"But do let me speak," pleaded Pons. "Look you, in the first place, I have spoken to Schmucke!"

"Ah, Monsieur Schmucke! Now there's a heart for you!" said she. "Yes, *he* loves me, *he* does; because he's poor. It's money as makes people unfeeling; and you are rich! Well, then, *have* a nurse, and see what a life *she'll* lead you! Why, she'll torment you like a cockchafer—if the doctor says that you must be made drink, she'll give you nothing but solid food; she'll just bury you first and rob you afterward! You don't deserve to have a Madame Cibot! Come, now! when Monsieur Poulain comes to see you, you just ask him for a nurse!"

"But in the name of all that's sacred, listen to me!" cried the indignant patient. "I did not refer to women when I spoke of my friend Schmucke, did I? I know well enough that you and he are the only two persons who sincerely love me—"

"Will you just have the goodness not to flare up like that?" exclaimed Madame Cibot, making a rush at Pons, and compelling him, by main force, to lie down again.

"But how can I help being fond of you?" said poor Pons.

"You *are* fond of me, then, really? Come, come, you must excuse me, monsieur," said she, weeping and wiping her eyes. "Yes, yes, you love me, as you might love a servant to whom you leave an annuity of six hundred francs, just as you might throw a bit of bread to a dog."

"Oh! Madame Cibot," cried Pons; "what do you take me for? You do not know me!"

"Ah! then you love me more than that?" resumed Madame Cibot; "you love your good stout Cibot like a mother? Well, that's just how it is; I *am* your mother, and you two are just my children! Ah! if I only knew who it is that has caused you all this trouble, I'd get myself sent to the assizes, or even to the police-court, for I'd tear their eyes out for 'em. Those people deserve to be put to death at St. James's barrier; and even *that's* too good for such miscreated wretches! *You* so kind-hearted and so

gentle, for you *n'have* a heart of gold; you were created and sent into the world to make some woman happy—yes, you *would* have made her happy, that you would—any one can see that; you are just cut out for it. Now, as for myself, when I saw how you jogged along with Monsieur Schmucke, says I to myself: 'Yes! Monsieur Pons has missed his vocation; he was cut out to be a good husband.' Come now, you *are* fond of the ladies, aren't you?"

"Ah! yes," said Pons; "and I never met a woman who loved me—"

"Really now, you don't mean to say so?" cried Dame Cibot, as, with an enticing air, she went up to Pons and seized his hand; "you don't know what it is to n'have a sweetheart? Is it possible? Now, *for my part*, if I were in your place, I shouldn't like to quit this world for n'another without having known what's the greatest n'happiness on n'earth. Poor duck! If I weren't what I have been, upon my word and honor I'd leave Cibot for your sake! Why, with such a nose as you n'have—for you n'have a very fine nose—how did you manage, my poor cherub? You will tell me, perhaps, as it isn't n'every woman who knows how to choose a man, n'and it's a vast pity as they should marry as they do, at random; it really is. Now, for my part, I thought as you n'had sweethearts by the dozen, ballet-girls, n'actresses, and duchesses. Yes, when I saw you a-going out, which I would say to Cibot: 'Look, there's Monsieur Pons a-going to look after the ladies.' Upon my word and honor that's exactly what I used to say, so firm was my belief as you was a favorite with the women! Why, you were sent into the world to love and to *be* loved! I could see that much, look you, my dear little sir, the very day as you first dined here. Ah! wasn't your n'heart full when you saw the pleasure as you was a-giving to Monsieur Schmucke! And him, too, as was a-crying over it even the next day when he says to me: 'Montame Zibod, he tined here!' Which I declare that I cried likewise, like a fool as I was. Ah! and how cut up he was when you began your town-skippings again! and took to dining out again! Poor man! never was such distress seen! Ah! right you are indeed to make him your heir! Why, he's as good as an entire family, the dear good man! Don't you forget him; for, if you do, God won't admit you'n into paradise; for He won't admit any one n'as hasn't shown themselves grateful to their friends, by leaving them legacies."

Pons made some vain attempts to reply; but Dame Cibot talked as the wind blows. We have discovered a method of stopping steam-engines; but it will puzzle inventive genius to find out a method of stopping the tongue of a portress.

"I know exactly what you're going to say," continued she. "But making one's will, when one is ill, doesn't kill a body; and if I were in your shoes, I wouldn't, in case of an n'accident, leave the poor lamb to take care of himself; for that's just what he is—the good creature of the good God; he knows naught about anything. I wouldn't leave him at the mercy of a pack of rascally men of business, and of your relations, which they're all a lot of scums. See now, is there a single one of them who has been to see you during the last three weeks? And you would leave your property to *them!* Are you aware that what is here is worth the trouble of leaving to some one? at least so they say."

"Oh! I know that," said Pons.

"Remonencq, who knows you are an amateur, and is a dealer himself, says as he would willingly pay you an annuity of thirty thousand francs, in order to have your pictures when you're dead and gone. There's a bit of business for you! If I were you, I'd close with the offer! But I believed that he was making game of me when he said that. You ought to n'inform Monsieur Schmucke of the value of all these things; for he's a man as is as easily deceived as a child; he hasn't the faintest notion of the value of these fine things of yours! He has so little idea of it that he would go and give 'em all away for a mere nothing; unless he kept 'em, out of pure love to you, all his life; that is to say, if he survives you:

but your death will be the death of him! But *I* shall be here! *I'll* defend him against the whole world; me and Cibot together."

"*Dear Madame Cibot!*" exclaimed Pons, quite touched by this terrible chatter which seemed to him to be imbued with the unaffected feeling characteristic of the poor. "What *would* have become of me but for you and Schmucke?"

"Ah, yes. We n'are really the only friends you have on earth. That's quite true! But two kind hearts are worth all the relations in the world. Don't talk to me about relations! They are like the tongue, as the old *actor* says, a world of goodness and iniquity. Where *are* these relations of yours? Have you got any relations? If you have, *I* never set eyes on 'em."

"It is they who have laid me on this bed of sickness!" cried poor Pons, with profound bitterness.

"Ah! then you *have* some relations!" cried Madame Cibot, springing up as if the armchair in which she was sitting had been of iron and had suddenly become red-hot. "Ah, well! they are mighty well-bred people, these relations of yours, I *must* say! Why, these twenty days, yes, these twenty days this very morning, have you been lying on your death-bed, and they haven't come to inquire about you yet! *That* coffee's a little *too* strong, that is! Why, if I were in your place, I'd rather leave my money to the Foundling Hospital than give them a single farthing!"

"Well, my dear Madame Cibot, I intended to leave all I possess to my first cousin once removed, the daughter of my first cousin, President Camusot; you know whom I mean—the judge who came here one morning about two months ago—"

"Oh, yes! the stout little man what sent his servants here to beg your pardon—for his wife's stupidity—yes, and didn't the lady's-maid ask me a lot of questions about you, the conceited old minx; I should have just liked to dust her velvet mantle for her with my broomstick! A lady's-maid with a velvet mantle, indeed! Was such a thing ever n'heard of? No! upon my honor the world is turned topsy-turvy! What are revolutions made for, n'I should like to know? Dine twice a day, if you can, and welcome, you scoundrels of plutoscraps! But what *I* say is that the laws are n'useless, that nothing is sacred, if Louis Philippe doesn't keep folks in their proper places; for sure*ly*, if we n'are n'all equal, as we n'are—aren't we?—a lady's-maid has no right to n'have a velvet mantle, when here am I, Madame Cibot, with a character for thirty years' honesty, haven't got no velvet mantle! It's a fine thing, I *must* say! We n'ought to be n'able to tell what folks are by their dress. A lady's-maid is only a lady's-maid, when n'all's said and done; just as I'm only a portress. What do we n'have spinach-seed epaulets n'in the milingtary for'n? Every man to his grade, say I! Now, shall I just let you'n into the secret of all this? Well, France has just gone to perdition, that's the long and short of it! Now, under the Emperor—eh, monsieur?—things were very differently managed. Well, as I was a-saying to Cibot: 'Now, look you, a family as allows its lady's-maid to wear velvet mantles must be a bowelless lot—"

"Bowelless! Yes; that's the very word," said Pons; and thereupon he proceeded to relate his grievances and troubles to Madame Cibot, who exploded with invectives against Pons's relatives, exhibited, as sentence by sentence of the sad recital fell from his lips, the most marked sympathy, and wound up by bursting into a flood of tears!

In order to understand this sudden intimacy between the old musician and Madame Cibot, it will suffice for the reader to picture to himself the situation of a bachelor, who, for the first time in his life, is attacked by a serious illness and stretched upon a sick bed. *There* he lies, alone in the wide world, thrown entirely upon his own resources, condemned to get through the day as best he can, without any extraneous aid, and finding the hours pass all the more slowly, in that he is the victim of the indefinable discomforts of *hepatitis*—a disorder that

is enough to cast a black shadow upon the very brightest existence. Cut off from his numerous occupations, the patient falls into what may be termed the atrophy of Paris; he regrets all that that city offers gratis to the eyes and ears of its denizens. The deep and tenebrous solitude that surrounds him, his complaint—a complaint that tells upon the moral, more even than on the physical man, the emptiness of the life he leads, all combine to induce the solitary bachelor (especially if his character be naturally weak and his heart sensitive and credulous) to attach himself to his nurse, just as a drowning man clings to a plank. Accordingly, Pons listened with rapture to the gossip of Madame Cibot. To him, Schmucke, Madame Cibot and Doctor Poulain formed the whole of humanity, in like manner as his chamber was his universe. If ordinary patients invariably restrict their attention to objects within the immediate sphere of their observation, and if *their* individuality exerts itself in subordination to the objects and persons by which they are surrounded, judge to what straits an old bachelor, whose affections are unengaged and who has never known what love is, may, under similar circumstances, be reduced. After a three weeks' illness, Pons had arrived at such a pass that he would, at times, regret not having married Madeleine Vivet! Can it then be matter of surprise, that, during these weeks, Madame Cibot made great progress in the good graces of the invalid who, but for her, would have given himself up for lost; for as to Schmucke, he was simply a second Pons to the poor patient. The wonderful art —and it was unconscious art—of Madame Cibot consisted in this; that she gave expression to Pons's own idea.

"Ah! there is the doctor," cried she, hearing the bell ring; and so saying she left Pons alone; for the ring told her that the Jew and Remonencq had arrived.

"Don't make a noise, gentlemen," said she; "so as he mayn't hear anything; for wherever his treasure is in question, he's as touchy as a man can be."

"Oh! a mere walk round will be sufficient," replied the Jew, who was armed with his magnifying lens and an opera-glass.

XVI.

A COUNCIL OF CORRUPTION.

THE salon containing the main portion of the Pons Museum was one of those old salons that the architects employed by the ancient nobility of France used to design. This salon was twenty-five feet wide, thirty feet long, and thirteen feet in height. Pons's pictures, sixty-seven in number, were all hung upon the four walls of this paneled chamber, whose panels were painted white and gold, though the white had turned yellow and the gold red beneath the touch of time, and thus harmonized with the pictures instead of marring their effect. Fourteen statues, of which some stood upon columns and some on buhl pedestals, adorned the corners of the room and the spaces between the pictures; while carved ebony sideboards, of truly regal richness, lined the walls, breast high. These sideboards held the curiosities; while a range of credences, made of carved wood, occupied the middle of the salon and offered to the eye of the spectator the rarest products of human skill, ivory-work, wood-work, bronzes, enamels, jewelry, porcelain, etc., etc.

Immediately on entering this sanctum, the Jew walked straight up to four masterpieces, which he recognized as the gems of the collection and as the productions of masters of whose work he had no specimens. These four pictures were to Elie Magus what those *desiderata* which send the naturalist scampering from east to occident, through tropic, desert, pampas, savannah and "forest primeval" are to the naturalist.

The first of these pictures was a Sebastian del Piombo, the second a Fra Bartolomeo della Porta, the third a landscape by Hobbema, and the fourth, the portrait of a woman by Albert Durer—four dia-

monds! In the domain of painting, Sebastian del Piombo is, as it were, a luminous point, in which three schools of painting meet and display their most remarkable qualities. This artist was a Venetian painter, who went to Rome for the purpose of catching the style of Raphael, under the tuition of Michael Angelo, who wanted to make Piombo Raphael's rival, so that Angelo might, in the person of one of his lieutenants, wage war with the sovereign pontiff of the art of painting. Thus, in the few pictures which this indolent man of genius condescended to paint, pictures whose cartoons were, it is said, designed by Michael Angelo himself, Piombo combined the coloring of the Venetian school, the composition of the Florentine school, and the style of Raphael. To what perfection Sebastian del Piombo, armed as he was with this triple power, managed to attain, may be learned from a careful study of his portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the Paris Museum. That portrait may safely be compared with Titian's "Man with a Glove," with the "Portrait of an Old Man" (in which Raphael has united his own excellence to that of Correggio), and with the "Charles VIII." of Leonardo da Vinci. Piombo's picture will lose nothing by the comparison. These four pearls are equal in water, in orience, in roundness, in brilliance, and in value. Human art can go no further. In these productions it is superior even to nature itself, which gave to the original but an ephemeral existence.

Now, Pons possessed a picture painted by this great genius, Piombo; another gem from his imperishable, but incurably indolent, pallet. This picture was a "Knight of Malta Praying." It was on slate; and in point of freshness, finish, and depth of treatment, superior even to the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli. The Fra Bartolomeo was a picture of the Holy Family, and might, with many a connoisseur, have passed for a picture by Raphael. The Hobbema would have fetched sixty thousand francs in the auction-room. As for the Albert Durer, this "Portrait of a Woman" was similar to the celebrated Holzschuer of Nuremberg, for which the kings of Bavaria, of Holland and of Prussia, at various times, offered two hundred thousand francs, in vain. Is this picture a portrait of the wife or daughter of the Chevalier Holzschuer, the friend of Albert Durer? This hypothesis would seem to be a certainty; for the woman in Pons's picture is represented in such an attitude that the picture apparently requires a pendant, and the painted coat of arms is arranged in the same way in both portraits. Finally, the *ætatis suæ XLI.* is in exact accordance with the age indicated in the portrait so religiously observed by the house of Holzschuer of Nuremberg, and of which an engraving has recently been completed.

Tears stood in the eyes of Elie Magus as he turned them now to one, now to another, of these four masterpieces.

"I will give you a bonus of two thousand francs for each of these pictures, if you can get them sold to me for forty thousand francs!" he whispered to Dame Cibot, who was amazed at this fortune which seemed to have fallen from the clouds.

The admiration, or — to speak more accurately — the delirium, of Magus had so disturbed his intellect, and so completely routed his habitual cupidity, that *the Jew* entirely disappeared, as may be seen.

"And what am I to have?" asked Remonencq, who knew nothing about pictures.

"Everything here is of the same caliber," slyly whispered the Jew to Remonencq. "Take any ten pictures, haphazard, on the same terms, and you are a made man!"

These three thieves were still gazing at each other, under the influence of that delight which is of all delights the keenest, namely, the realization of our hopes of fortune, when the voice of the sick man resounded in their ears, in tones that vibrated like the sound-waves of a bell.

"Who is there?" cried Pons.

"Monsieur! get into bed again, at once," cried Madame Cibot, darting up

to Pons, and forcing him to go back to bed. "How now! Do you want to kill yourself? Well, it wasn't Monsieur Poulain; it's that honest fellow Remonencq, who's so uneasy about you that he's come to hear how you're a-getting on. Folks are so fond of you that there's not a soul in the house as isn't quite put out about you. Pray what made you take fright?"

"Why, it seems to me that there are several of you in there," said the patient.

"Several! Come, now, that's rich! Why, you must be dreaming! You'll end by going mad; 'pon my word n'and honor, you will! Stay a moment; just look—" So saying, Dame Cibot flew to the door and opened it, making a sign to Magus to withdraw, and beckoning Remonencq forward.

"Well! my dear sir," said the Auvergnat, taking the cue that Madame Cibot had given him; "I am come to hear how you are getting on; for the whole house is in a mortal funk about you—No one likes Death to find his way into a house! And, in short, Daddy Monistrol, whom you know well, directed me to tell you that if you wanted cash, he was ready to oblige you—"

"He has sent you hither to steal a glance at my knickknacks," said the old collector, with distrustful acerbity.

In cases of liver disease, the patient almost invariably imbibes some special antipathy for the time being; he concentrates his ill-humor on some particular person or thing. Now Pons imagined that people had designs upon his treasure; and his *fixed idea* was to keep an eye upon it. He would send Schmucke almost every other minute to see that no one had slipped into the sanctuary.

"Your collection is certainly quite fine enough to attract the notice of the *chineurs*," replied Remonencq, astutely. "For my own part, I don't know much about the curiosity branch of high art, but your reputation as a connoisseur, monsieur, stands so high, that, though I don't know much about such matters, I'm quite willing to deal with you with my eyes shut. If you should be in want of money at any time—for nothing costs so much as these cursed illnesses: why there's my sister now, in no more than ten days, spent as much as fifteen-pence on physic, when her blood was turned, which she'd have got well right enough without it. The doctors are swindlers, who take advantage of our condition to—"

"Good-by, monsieur; thank you," interrupted Pons, glancing uneasily at the dealer in old iron.

"I'll go as far as the door with him; just to see as he doesn't lay his hand on anything," said Dame Cibot.

"Yes, yes," said Pons, thanking Madame Cibot with a look.

Madame Cibot closed the bedroom door behind her, and, by so doing, reawakened all Pons's suspicions. She found Magus standing motionless in front of the four pictures. His immobility, his admiration can be understood by those only whose minds are open to the *beau idéal*, and susceptible of those emotions which perfection in art is capable of exciting; by those—and only those—who on visiting the museum will stand agaze, for hours together, before the "Joconda" of Leonardo da Vinci, the "Antiope" of Correggio—the masterpiece of that painter—Titian's mistress, the "Holy Family" of Andrea del Sarto, the "Children surrounded by Flowers," of Domenichino, the little camayeu of Raphael, and his "Portrait of an Old Man," those greatest masterpieces in the whole range of painting.

"Steal away without making any noise," said Madame Cibot.

Thereupon the Jew slowly retreated, walking backward, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the pictures; just as a lover keeps his eyes fixed upon the sweetheart to whom he bids adieu. When Magus had reached the landing, Madame Cibot, in whose brain the Jew's silent contemplation of the pictures had given rise to certain ideas, tapped him on his bony arm, and said:

"You must give me *four* thousand francs for each picture! otherwise nothing can be done—"

"I am so poor," said Magus. "If I

want to have these pictures, it is for the love of them only, purely and simply for the love I bear to art, my pretty dame!"

"You are so lean, my honey, that I can quite understand your love for the pictures. But if you don't promise me sixteen thousand francs to-day, in the presence of Remonencq here, it'll be twenty thousand francs to-morrow."

"I promise you the sixteen thousand," replied the Jew, terrified at the rapacity of this portress.

"What is there as a Jew can swear on?" quoth Dame Cibot to Remonencq.

"Oh! you may trust him," replied the old-iron dealer; "he's as honest a man as I am myself."

"Well then! and now for *you*," said the portress. "If I get some of the pictures sold to you, what will *you* give me?"

"Half my profits," replied Remonencq promptly.

"I should prefer something down: I'm not in business," replied the portress.

"You seem to understand business uncommonly well," said Elie Magus, with a smile; "you would make a famous tradeswoman."

"I offer to take her into partnership, person and property both," said the Auvergnat, seizing the plump arm of Madame Cibot and patting it with sledge-hammer force. "The only capital I ask for is her good looks! You are wrong to stick to your Turk of a Cibot and his needle! Can a little porter enrich a fine woman like you? Ah! what a figure you would cut in a shop on the boulevards, surrounded by curiosities, jabbering away to the amateurs and wheedling them out of their money! Turn your back upon the lodge, as soon as you've feathered your nest here, and you'll see what we two will do between us!"

"Feathered my nest!" exclaimed Dame Cibot. "Why, I'm incapable of taking the worth of a pin! Do you hear what I say, Remonencq?" cried the portress; "I'm known in the quarter for an honest woman, yah!"

As she uttered these words her eyes were all ablaze.

"There, there! make your mind easy," said Elie Magus. "This Auvergnat looks as if he respected you too well to wish to offend you."

"Ah! wouldn't she just know how to manage the customers for you!" exclaimed Remonencq.

"Now be just, my little fellows," rejoined Madame Cibot with returning good temper; "and judge for yourselves, what my sitiwation here n'is like. Here n'have I been a-wearing myself out these ten years for the sake of these two old boys, and never received no more than a few fine words for my pains. Why, here's Remonencq'll tell you, as I feed the two old fellows by *contact*, and that I loses from twenty to thirty sous a day by it, as all my savings have gone that way; yes, by my mother's soul—which she was the only parient as I ever knew—it's as true as I'm a living woman, as true n'as there's daylight above us at this moment; and may my coffee be my poison if I lie to the tune of one centime! Well, then, here's one on 'em a-going to die, isn't there? And of these two men, as I've been a real mother to, he's the richest! Well, now, would you believe it, my dear sir: here have I been a-telling of him as he's a dead man, any time this last three weeks (for, you must know, Monsieur Poulain has given him up), and yet the shabby fellow no more says anything n'about mentioning of me in his will than as if I was an n'utter stranger to him! Upon my word and n'honor we never gets our dues unless we takes 'em, as I'm an n'honest woman, we don't; for are you a-going to put any trust in the heirs?—it's not likely! Now just let me tell you—for hard words break no bones—all people are scoundrels!"

"Right you are," said Elie Magus, grimly; "and 'tis we, after all, who are the honest folks."

"Let me have my say," pursued Dame Cibot; "I'm not talking about you: Pressingt persons are always accepted! as the old actor says. I swear to you that these two gentlemen n'are already in my debt to the tune of about three thousand francs, and that my little savings has all gone in medicine and in their

concerns, and where should I be n'if they wasn't to repay the advances as I've made—I'm so stupid, with my honesty, as I don't dare to say one word to 'em about the matter. Now, you n'as are in business, my dear sir, would you advise me to go to an n'advocate ?"

"An advocate!" cried Remonencq, "you know a great deal more than all the *advocasts* put together!"

At this point, the conversation was interrupted by the noise caused by the fall of some heavy body upon the dining-room floor—a noise that roused the echoes of the spacious staircase.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Dame Cibot, "what *can* have happened? It seems to me as it must be Monsieur Pons as has just taken a ticket for the pit!"

Thereupon she gave a shove to her two companions, who hastily ran downstairs, while Dame Cibot herself darted into the dining-room and there beheld Pons stretched at full length upon the floor, with nothing but his night-shirt upon him, and in a swoon! Taking the old bachelor in her arms, she raised him from the floor and carried him—light as a feather—to his bed. Having installed the dying man therein, she proceeded to restore animation by applying burned feathers to his nose and bathing his temples with *eau-de-Cologne*. So soon as she saw that Pons's eyes were open, and that consciousness was restored, she placed her hands upon her hips, and thus began:

"Without slippers, and without a rag upon you, except your shirt! Why, it's enough to give you your death! And wherefore do you mistrust me? If this is to be the game, monsieur, adieu! After waiting on you for ten years, after a-spending my own money on your private affairs, which all my savings is gone that way, just to save poor Monsieur Schmucke from being worried, which the poor man goes up and down stairs crying like a child—*this* is my reward! You play the spy— Well! God has punished you for it; and it serves you right! And me a-straining of myself, to carry you in my arms, and a-running the risk of being n'injured for the rest o' my days. Oh! and didn't I leave the door open?"

"Whom were you talking to?" said Pons.

"Now there's a pretty notion for a man to take into his head!" cried Dame Cibot. "What next, I should like to know? Am I your slave? Am I bound to account to you for n'everything I do? Do you know that if you worry me n'in this way, I'll leave you to shift for yourself; and you can just hire a nurse!"

Terrified by this menace, Pons, unwittingly, allowed Madame Cibot to perceive to what lengths she might go armed with that Damoclean sword.

"It is only my disease!" said Pons, piteously.

"Yes, that's all very fine!" said Madame Cibot roughly, marching off and leaving poor Pons alone in great perplexity. Remorse, admiration for the clamorous self-sacrifice of his nurse, and self-accusation, combined to banish from his mind all consciousness of the terrible aggravation of his malady consequent upon his fall on the dining-room floor. Madame Cibot met Schmucke coming upstairs, and thus accosted him:

"Well, monsieur, I've got some very bad news to tell you, and no mistake. Monsieur Pons is taking leave of his senses! Only fancy; he got out o' bed, and followed me, and fell flat upon the floor at full length, I do assure you; ask him why he did it, he knows nothing whatever n'about it. He's in a bad way."

Schmucke listened to Madame Cibot as if she were talking Hebrew.

"I made an n'exertion, which I shall feel it to the end of my born days!" added Madame Cibot, pretending to be in acute pain; for it had occurred to her that she might make a little capital by acting on an idea that had fortuitously presented itself to her when she felt that her muscles were a trifle strained. "I am so stupid," she continued. "When I saw him a-lying there upon the ground, I takes him up in my arms and I carries him to his bed, just as if he'd been a child—there now! But now I feel as I've

strained myself! Oh! I feel quite ill! I'm going down to the lodge; see to our patient. I shall send Cibot to fetch Doctor Poulain to me! I'd rather die than be a cripple."

And so saying, Madame Cibot clutched the balustrade and rolled, rather than walked, downstairs; indulging, as she went, in a thousand contortions and in groans so heartrending that the startled occupants of the house quitted their respective habitations and thronged the landings of the staircase. Schmucke—his eyes streaming with tears—supported the sufferer and related to the onlookers the story of the portress's self-sacrifice: nor was it long ere the whole house, nay, the whole neighborhood, was ringing with the sublime exploit of Madame Cibot, who—so the rumor ran—had incurred a fatal strain by carrying one of the Nut-Crackers in her arms. On returning to Pons's bedside, Schmucke informed the invalid of the desperate state of their factotum; whereupon the two friends looked at one another, and said: "What will become of us, without her?" Schmucke, seeing how much Pons had suffered through his escapade, did not venture to scold him.

"Dat file pric-à-prac; I would rader purn de whole of it, dan loze mein friend," exclaimed he, on learning the cause of Pons's mishap. "Diztruzt Montame Zibod, who lends us her zavings! Dat is not right; put it is de disease—"

"Ah! what a disease it is! I *am* changed; I feel that I am," said Pons. "I should be sorry to cause you any pain, my good Schmucke."

"Grumple at *me!*" said Schmucke, "and leaf Montame Zibod in bease."

Doctor Poulain made short work of the infirmity with which Madame Cibot was, according to her own account, threatened; and this semi-miraculous cure added great luster to his reputation in the Marais. In mentioning the matter to Pons, the doctor attributed the cure to the excellent constitution of the patient, who, to the intense satisfaction of her two gentlemen, resumed her duties, in their behalf, on the seventh day after the misadventure. The whole event increased the influence—the tyranny—of the portress over the establishment of the Pair of Nut-Crackers cent per cent. During her seven days absence, they had run into debt. She paid the debt, and took advantage of the occasion to obtain from Schmucke (ah, how readily!) an acknowledgment for the two thousand francs, which she represented herself to have lent the two friends.

"Ah, what a wonderful doctor Monsieur Poulain is!" said Dame Cibot to Pons. "Depend upon it, he'll pull you through, my dear sir; for sure enough he's dragged me out of my coffin! Poor Cibot thought it was all up with me; well, as Monsieur Poulain must have told you, when I was a-laying stretched upon my bed I thought of nothing but you: 'Oh God,' says I to myself, 'take *me*, and let my dear Monsieur Pons live.'"

"Poor dear Madame Cibot, you narrowly escaped being a cripple on my account."

"Ah! yes. If it hadn't 'a' been for Monsieur Poulain, I should have been in the deal shift as is a-waiting for all of us. Well, well! we must put up with the consequences of our n'own folly, as the old *actor* puts it! We must take things n'as they come, philosophical. How did you get on without me?"

"Schmucke nursed me," replied the invalid; "but our poor nurse, and our connection, suffered in consequence — I really don't know how he managed."

"Keeb yourself galm, Bons!" cried Schmucke. "Daddy Zibod agted as our banger."

"Oh! Don't mention that, my dear lamb; you n'are, both of you, our children," replied Dame Cibot. "Our savings are in good keeping in your hands, and no mistake. You're safer nor the Bank of France. As long as we've a bit of bread to eat, half of it's yours—the thing isn't worth speaking about."

"Boor Montame Zibod!" said Schmucke, as he went away. But Pons held his peace.

"Would you believe now, my cherub," said Dame Cibot to her patient, seeing that he was ill at ease, "would you believe that when I was a-dying (for I was pretty nigh face to face with Madame Flatnose!) what tormented me most was

a-leaving of you two alone to shift for yourselves, and a-leaving of my poor Cibot without a farthing? My savings is such a mere trifle, that I only mention them with references to my death n'and to Cibot, who's an n'angel! Ay, that poor creature nursed me like a queen, and cried over me like a calf. But I trusted to you, on the word of an honest woman, I did. Says I to myself: 'All right, Cibot; my gentlemen'll never let you want for bread.'"

To this direct appeal *ad testamentum* Pons vouchsafed no reply; and the portress waited silently to hear what he would say. At length the answer came:

"I will recommend you to Schmucke," said the patient.

"Ah!" cried the portress, "whatever you do will be sure to be right; I puts my faith in you, in your good heart. Don't let's ever talk about the thing, for you n'humiliate me, my dear cherub; think about getting well! You'll live longer than the rest of us."

Profound was the anxiety which now took possession of Madame Cibot; and she resolved to obtain, from *her gentleman,* an explicit declaration of his intentions with regard to her legacy. Her first step toward carrying her resolution into effect, was to sally forth and call upon Dr. Poulain that very evening, after Schmucke—who since Pons had been taken ill always had his meals by his friend's bedside—had finished dinner.

XVII.

THE HISTORY OF EVERY DEBUT AT PARIS.

Doctor Poulain lived in the Rue d'Orleans, where he occupied a small ground-floor comprising an anteroom, a drawing-room, two bedrooms, a pantry, a kitchen, a servant's room, and a little cellar. The pantry, which was contiguous to the anteroom, and communicated with one of the bedrooms—the doctor's—had been converted into a study. This suite of apartments formed part of the wing of a house—an enormous pile, built in the days of the Empire, on the site of an ancient hotel, the garden of which still existed and was apportioned between the three tenements into which the ground-floor of the building was divided.

The rooms inhabited by the doctor had undergone no alteration for forty years. Paint, paper, decorations, all savored of the imperial epoch. The glasses and their frames, the patterns of the paper, the ceilings and the paint were dim with smoke and daubed with the accumulated dirt of forty years. Yet this little habitation in the depths of the Marais cost its occupier forty pounds a year.

In the second of the two bedrooms, Madame Poulain, the doctor's mother, aged sixty-seven, was spending the years that yet remained to her. She worked for the breeches-makers. She stitched gaiters, leather breeches, braces and belts, in short, all the appurtenances of and belonging to those now unfashionable garments. Occupied as she was with household duties and the superintendence of the only servant that her son employed, she never left the precincts of her dwelling, but took an occasional airing in the little garden to which a glass door in the drawing-room gave access. She had now been a widow for twenty years.

On the death of her husband she sold the good-will and stock in trade of her breeches-manufactory to her foreman, who reserved for her work enough to enable her to earn about fifteenpence a day. Urged by a desire to place her only son—no matter at what cost—in a position superior to that which his father had occupied, the Widow Poulain had shrunk from no sacrifice which might further the education of her boy. Proud of her Æsculapius, and believing in his future success, she steadily pursued the path of total self-denial, and found her happiness in ministering to her son and laying by money for him. Her one day-dream was his welfare, and, moreover, she loved him with an *intelligent* love that is beyond the reach of many mothers. Madame Poulain never forgot that she had been a common workwoman, and since the good

lady spoke in S, just as Madame Cibot spoke in N, and was loath that her son should be injured through any ridicule or contempt that she might excite, she would, of her own accord, take refuge in her own room when it so happened that any distinguished patient came to consult her son; or when any of his school-fellows or hospital companions presented themselves; so that the defective education of the mother—a defect that was amply redeemed by her sublime affection for her offspring—never raised a blush upon the doctor's cheek. The sale of the good-will and stock in trade of the breeches-manufactory had produced some twenty thousand francs, which the widow invested in the public funds in the year 1820; and the dividends, amounting to eleven hundred francs, constituted her only independent means. Under these circumstances, no one will be surprised to learn that during many years the widow's neighbors in the Rue d'Orleans were, at certain times and seasons, edified by the spectacle of the family linen hanging on the clothes-lines in the little garden. The servant and Madame Poulain, between them, did the washing at home, at a trifling cost. But this detail of domestic economy did the doctor a great deal of harm. How could so poor a man be a man of talent?

The eleven hundred francs were absorbed by house rent; so that, at starting, Madame Poulain—a stout little old woman, with a kind heart—had to meet, out of the proceeds of her own unaided industry, all the expenses of the humble home. At length, after twelve years' perseverance in his stony path, Dr. Poulain managed to scrape together about three thousand francs a year; so that his mother had an income of about five thousand francs with which to make both ends meet. Those who know what Paris is, are well aware that such an income is just sufficient to procure the necessaries of life.

The drawing-room (which served as a patient's waiting-room) was meanly furnished. It contained the inevitable mahogany sofa covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, flowered. Add to this four arm-chairs, six ordinary chairs, a console and a tea-table, and the inventory is complete. All these valuables had been selected by the deceased breeches-maker, and formed part of his estate at his decease. The time-piece, which was never released from its dome of glass, was in the form of a lyre, and was flanked by a pair of Egyptian candelabra. To what process of preservation the window-curtains of this apartment had been subjected, was a question which forced itself upon the observer; but that they had contrived to hang together for a period of abnormal length was obvious from their texture and their pattern: they were of yellow calico stamped with red roses, and came from the manufactory at Jouy. Now it was in the year 1809 that Obercampf received the compliments of the emperor on account of these atrocious products of the cotton trade! The doctor's study was furnished in the same style, with furniture that had already seen service in the paternal chamber, and gave the room a meager, chilly, poverty-stricken aspect. Now in this age, when the advertisement is all-powerful, when we gild the lamp-posts in the Place de la Concorde, in order that the pauper may fancy himself a wealthy citizen, and find comfort in the illusion, what patient will believe in the skill of a physician who has neither fame nor—furniture?

The antechamber was used as a dining-room; and the servant worked in it, when not engaged in the discharge of her culinary functions, or in relieving the solitude of the doctor's mother. Enter this room, and a glance at the scanty sand-colored muslin curtains of the window, which looks on the court, revealed to you the decent penury that reigned in this drear abode, which was a desert during half the day. Those cupboards *must* conceal the mouldy *pate*, the chipped plate, the immemorial cork, the napkin that has done duty for a week; in short all those venial ignominies that are to be found in small Parisians households, and thence find their way, directly, to the ragman's creel. Under these circumstances, and in these

days when the crown-piece nestles at the bottom of every heart, and rings in every phrase that is uttered, the doctor, who was now thirty, and had a mother without connections of any kind, very naturally remained unmarried. In his intercourse with the various families to which his professional duties introduced him, he had never—throughout ten long years—encountered even the slightest foundation for a castle in the air; for the people whom Dr. Poulain attended occupied a sphere in which the daily routine of existence was similar to that to which he himself was accustomed. The only establishments he saw—those of minor clerks and petty manufacturers—resembled his own establishment. His richest patients were the butchers, the bakers, the large retail dealers of the district; and these good people generally imputed their recovery to the operations of Dame Nature, in order to reduce to a couple of shillings the fee of the doctor who came to visit them on foot. In the medical profession the carriage is more important than the cure.

A commonplace and uneventful life tells, in the long run, upon the most adventurous spirit. A man molds himself to the shape required by his lot, and accepts the yoke of a humdrum existence. Thus, after a ten years' practice of his profession, Dr. Poulain pursued his Sisyphean calling without feeling the extreme dejection that, in the earlier portion of his career, had filled his cup with bitterness. Yet he too had his day-dream. At Paris every person has a day-dream. Remonencq had his day-dream; Madame Cibot hers. Dr. Poulain's day-dream took the form of a hope that he might be summoned to the sick-bed of some wealthy and powerful patient, and obtain through the influence of this patron-patient—whom he would *of course* succeed in curing—the post of chief physician to a hospital, or of physician in ordinary to a prison, or a boulevard theater, or a government office. It was in this way, indeed, that he had procured his appointment as a physician to the *mairie*. Introduced by Madame Cibot, he had attended and cured M. Pillerault, the owner of the house to which the Cibots were attached as porters. M. Pillerault, who was granduncle, on the mother's side, to the Countess Popinot, the wife of the Minister, became interested in the fortunes of the young doctor, whose hidden penury the old man had fathomed when he went to thank the physician for his attentions.

Actuated by this feeling, M. Pillerault induced his grandnephew the Minister—who adored his old uncle—to give Dr. Poulain the berth which he had now occupied for five years. The slender emoluments of this office came just in the very nick of time to prevent the doctor from resorting to that desperate measure—emigration; which, to a Frenchman, is almost as bad as death. Dr. Poulain took good care to pay Count Popinot a visit of acknowledgment, but finding that that statesman's medical attendant was the illustrious Bianchon,* the poor doctor fully understood that to solicit employment in that quarter would be a very hopeless enterprise. After having nursed the flattering hope of securing the patronage of an influential Minister—one of those twelve or fifteen great cards that, during the last sixteen years, a powerful hand has been shuffling on the green cloth of the council-table—Dr. Poulain found himself once more immersed in the Marais, and doomed to potter about among the small tradesmen and the poor of the district, and to act as registrar of deaths at a salary of twelve hundred francs per annum.

Dr. Poulain, who had distinguished himself as a resident medical student, and had developed into a careful practitioner, by no means lacked experience. Moreover, if his patients died, their death gave rise to no scandal; and he had an opportunity of studying every species of disease *in animâ vili*. You may readily imagine on what a regimen of gall he lived! And accordingly the expression of his face—a face which was naturally long and melancholy—was, sometimes, positively fearful. Picture to yourself

* See "Why the Atheist Prayed."

the eyes of Tartuffe glittering through a mask of yellow parchment, stamped with all the bitterness of Alceste ; picture to yourself the bearing, the attitude, and the glance of this man, who, knowing that he was quite as good a doctor as the illustrious Bianchon, found himself fixed in an obscure position by a hand of iron. Dr. Poulain could not help comparing his gains—which even on lucky days did not exceed ten francs—with those of Bianchon who made his five or six hundred francs per diem ! That reflection will explain all that envious hate that seethes in the bosom of the democrat. Nor could this victim of repressed ambition charge himself with any remissness. He had already tried to make a fortune by the invention of purgative pilules resembling those of Morison. He had intrusted the working of this speculation to one of his fellow-students, a resident student who had turned druggist. But this druggist fell in love with a ballet-girl at the opera, and became a bankrupt, and the patent of invention for the purgative pilules, having been taken out in his name, the magnificent discovery went to enrich his successor. The former resident student scampered off to Mexico —the land of gold—taking with him a thousand francs of poor Poulain's savings; and when the poor fellow went to the figurante to ask for his money, she treated him—by way of consolation stakes —as if he had been a money-lender. Since Poulain had had the good fortune to cure old Pillerault, his services had not been sought by any wealthy patient. So he had to run about the Marais on foot, like a hungry cat, and, in a round of twenty visits, would find only two that yielded him a fee of forty sous apiece. To him the liberal patient was that fairy bird which, in every region under the sun, goes by the name of *the white blackbird*.

The young briefless barrister, the young doctor without connection are the two most striking personifications of that genteel Despair which is peculiar to Paris —that chilly dumb Despair that walks about clad in black coat and trousers, whose shiny seams recall the zinc that roofs the attic in which it hides. The well-worn satin waistcoat, the well-saved hat, old gloves and calico shirt, complete the livery. 'Tis a perfect poem of misery, as somber as the secret cells of the Conciergerie. The penury of others—of the poet, the artist, the actor, the musician —is relieved by the gayety that Art brings in her train, and by the lightheartedness which prevails throughout Bohemia—that avenue to the Thebaïdes of genius : but the features of these two black-coated figures, that steal about on foot, and belong to two professions whose members live by the sufferings of humanity and see only its weaker and its baser sides—the features of the struggling barrister and struggling doctor— are frequently marked by a defiant and sinister expression, and reveal their mingled hatred of the wealthy and eagerness for wealth in glances that dart from their eyes like the first tongues of flame emitted by a smoldering conflagration. When two men, who were friends at school, encounter one another after an interval of twenty years, the rich one shuns the pauper who was once his comrade, does not recognize him, shudders at the thought of the abyss that destiny has placed between them. The one has traveled through life, borne along by Fortune's prancing steeds or throned on the golden clouds of triumph ; the other has plodded his weary way through subterraneous paths, " the common shores " of Paris, and is stained with all their "sable tokens." Ah ! how many of Dr. Poulain's former friends avoided him at the sight of that waistcoat and that coat.

The reader will now find no difficulty in understanding why Dr. Poulain played his part so perfectly in the little comedy which might be entitled : " Dame Cibot's peril."

All greeds and all ambitions have a freemasonry of their own. When the doctor not only failed to discover any organic lesion of any kind in Madame Cibot, but found that her pulse was admirably regular, and that her movements were entirely free from constraint, and

yet heard her screaming as if in pain, he saw at once that she had a motive for pretending to be at the point of death. Knowing that the speedy cure of a serious (imaginary) illness would cause his name to be talked about in the arrondissement, he exaggerated Madame Cibot's visionary rupture and talked about reducing it by taking it in time. In short, he administered fictitious remedies, and performed a fantastic operation, which were crowned with complete success. Having ransacked the arsenal of Desplein's extraordinary cures, and hit upon an out-of-the-way case, he proceeded to treat Madame Cibot by the same method, modestly gave the credit of its successful issue to the eminent surgeon, and represented himself as his imitator.

Such is the audacity of the Parisian debutant! He turns everything into a ladder, wherewith to reach his theater of action. But since all things—even the rungs of a ladder—wear out in time, the aspirants of every profession are at their wit's end for wood to make steps with.

At certain times the Parisian mutinies against success. Tired of erecting pedestals, he sulks like a spoiled child, and resolves to have no more idols; or, to be strictly accurate, men of talent are not always forthcoming to feed his infatuation. There are faults in the veins that supplies us with men of genius. When such a fault occurs the Parisian begins to kick; he is not content to be always adorning or adoring mediocrity.

When Madame Cibot, with her habitual bruskness, bounced into the doctor's dining-room, she surprised him and his aged mother at the dinner-table discussing a corn-salad—the cheapest of all salads—while their dessert was limited to an acuteangled triangle of Brie cheese which was flanked on one side by a dish containing a meager supply of figs, filberts, almonds, and raisins (commonly called *les quatre-mendiants*) and a plentiful supply of raisin-stalks, and on the other side by a dish of common apples.

"You need not go away, mother," said the doctor, detaining Madame Poulain by placing his hand upon her arm; "this is Madame Cibot, of whom you have heard me speak."

"My respects to you, madame; my duty to you, monsieur," said Dame Cibot, as she seated herself in the chair which the doctor offered her. "Ah! this good lady is your mother; she's most fortunate in having such a clever son; for he's my savior, madame; he pulled me n'out of the pit of—"

When the widow heard this eulogy upon her son from the lips of the portress, she thought Madame Cibot a charming person.

"Well, it's to tell you, dear Doctor Poulain, between ourselves, as poor Monsieur Pons is a-going on very badly indeed, and I want to have a word with you in relation to him—"

"Let us go into the drawing-room," said Dr. Poulain, intimating to Madame Cibot, by a significant gesture, that the servant was present.

So soon as Madame Cibot was in the drawing-room she entered into a lengthy exposition of her relations with the Pair of Nut-Crackers; she repeated, with divers embellishments, the story of her loan to them, and recounted the immense services which she had rendered to Messrs. Pons and Schmucke during the last ten years. According to her showing, those two old men would not have been alive but for her maternal care. She posed as an angel and told so many tear-besprinkled falsehoods that at length old Madame Poulain became deeply affected.

"You understand, my dear sir," said Madame Cibot in conclusion, "as it's highly n'important I should know n'exactly what Monsieur Pons intends to do for me in case he should happen to die; which of course I don't want him so to do scarcely; for you see, madame, looking after these two innocents is my very life; but if one of them goes I'll look after the other. *Nature* built me for the rival of *maternity*. If I hadn't some one to take an n'interest in and to make a child of I don't know whatever would become o' me. Well then, if Monsieur Poulain was willing he might do me a service, as I

should be very grateful for, by putting in a word for me with Monsieur Pons. My God! a thousand francs a year for life, is that too much, I should like to know? It 'ud be just so much in Monsieur Schmucke's pocket. Well, now, our dear invalid told me as he'd recommend me to this poor German, who, therefore, n'according to his idea, would be his heir. But what can one do with a man as can't tack two ideas together in French, and who, besides, may take it into his head to run off to Germany; he'll be so cut up by the death of his friend?"

"My dear Madame Cibot," replied the doctor, whose face now wore a very solemn aspect, "doctors have nothing whatever to do with such matters as you have mentioned, and I should be suspended from the practice of my profession if it were known that I had meddled with the testamentary arrangements of one of my patients. The law forbids a doctor to accept a legacy from his patient—"

"What a fool of a law! for what is there to hinder me from sharing my legacy with you?" replied Dame Cibot, without a moment's hesitation.

"I will go yet further," said the doctor; "my conscience as a medical man forbids me to talk to Monsieur Pons about his death. In the first place, his position is not sufficiently critical for that; and, in the second, such language coming from me would cause him a shock that might do him substantial injury, and so render his case desperate."

"But I make no bones about telling him to set his affairs in order—and n'it makes him not a penny the worse. He's accustomed to it! You needn't be afraid," said Madame Cibot.

"Don't say another word to me upon the subject, my dear Madame Cibot! Matters of this kind are not within the province of the physician; they are for the notary—"

"But, my dear Monsieur Poulain, suppose as Monsieur Pons was to ask you how he is of his own n'accord, and whether he would do well to take his precautions. That being so, would you refuse to tell him as it's a n'excellent way to get well again to n'have all your affairs ship-shape? Then you might just slip in one little word about me—"

"Oh! if he begins talking to me about making his will, I shall not dissuade him from doing so," said Dr. Poulain.

"Well, then, that matter's settled!" cried Madame Cibot. "I came to thank you for the trouble you took in my case," she added, slipping into the doctor's hand a curl-paper containing three pieces of gold. "That's all as I'm able to do just now. Ah! if I was only rich you should be rich too, dear Doctor Poulain; you n'as is the image of the good God on earth—Ah! madame, you've got an n'angel for a son."

So saying, Dame Cibot rose; Madame Poulain bowed to her in high good-humor, and the doctor escorted her as far as the landing. There this fearful Lady Macbeth of the street was enlightened by a ray of intelligence that came direct from hell. She perceived that the doctor must be her accomplice since he accepted an honorarium for the cure of a simulated malady.

"Why, my dear Monsieur Poulain," she said to him; "after having pulled me round after my accident, would you decline to save me from want by saying of a few words?"

The doctor felt that he had allowed the devil to get hold of one of his hairs, and that that hair was being twisted round the ruthless horn of the red claw. Startled by the notion of losing his integrity for so mere a trifle, he responded to Dame Cibot's diabolical suggestion by another equally diabolical.

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," said he, taking the good lady back into his apartments and conducting her to his study. "I am about to pay the debt of gratitude I owe you for having got me my post at the *mairie*—"

"We will go shares," said Madame Cibot, emphatically.

"In what?" asked the doctor.

"In the old man's fortune," replied the portress.

"You evidently don't know me," re-

plied the doctor, posing as Valerius Publicola. "Don't mention that subject to me again. I have an old school-fellow, a very clever young man who is all the more friendly toward me because our lot in life has been the same. While I was studying medicine he was learning law; while I was a resident student at the hospital, he was engrossing deeds in the office of a solicitor, Maître Couture. His father was a shoe-maker, just as mine was a manufacturer of breeches; so, you may be sure, he did not meet with much sympathy from those about him; and, what is more, he found no capital; for after all it is only through exciting sympathy that one gets capital. The best he could do was to treat for a provincial practice at Mantes. Now so little do provincial folks understand a Parisian intellect that my friend was constantly in hot water among them—"

"The scoundrels!" exclaimed Madame Cibot.

"Yes," pursued the doctor; "for the good people of Mantes combined against him with such effect that he was forced to sell his practice on account of some matters that were misrepresented so as to make him appear to be in the wrong; the king's attorney interfered; he belonged to the neighborhood, and made common cause with the natives of the place. This poor young man, whose name is Fraisier, who is even more lean and more threadbare than I am, and has no better house over his head, has taken refuge in our arrondissement. He is obliged to plead —for he is an advocate—before the *Juge de paix*, and in the ordinary police-courts. He lives close by—in the Rue de la Perle. If you go to number nine and mount to the third story, you will see, when you reach the landing, the words: CABINET DE MONSIEUR FRAISIER, in gilt letters on a little square of red morocco. Fraisier's business is almost exclusively confined to the litigation of the porters, the artisans, and the poor inhabitants of our arrondissement. His charges are very moderate. He is a man of honor; for I need hardly tell you that, with his abilities, he would now be driving his carriage if he were a rogue. I shall see my friend Fraisier this evening; go to him early to-morrow morning. He knows Monsieur Louchard the bailiff, Monsieur Tabareau the bailiff of the *Justice de paix*, Monsieur Vitel the *Juge de paix*, and Monsieur Trognon the notary. He has already won a position among the most reputable professional men of the district. If he undertakes your business and you can get him to act as Monsieur Pons's legal adviser, you will find in him, I can assure you, a second self. Only, let me warn you, not to propose to him, as you did to me, a mutual agreement of a dishonorable character; at the same time, I may tell you that he is an intelligent man, and that you and he will be able to come to some understanding. Then, as regards the remuneration of his services, I will act as your intermediary—"

Madame Cibot looked at the doctor with a knowing look, and inquired:

"Isn't he the legal gentleman as pulled Madame Florimond what keeps the haberdasher's shop in the Rue Vieille du Temple out of the mess as she got into over the estate of the gentleman what—"

"That's the very man," said the doctor.

"N'isn't it a shame," cried Madame Cibot, "that after he'd been and gone and got her a n'income of two thousand francs she should have gone and jilted him when he n'asked her to marry him, and should have thought as she was quits with him (as they say she did) by giving him a dozen holland shirts, two dozen handkerchiefs, and—in short, a n'outfit!"

"My dear Madame Cibot," replied the doctor, "the outfit you speak of cost a thousand francs; and Fraisier, who was at that time just commencing business in this district, was sadly in want of an outfit. Besides, Madame Florimond paid his bill of costs without caviling at a single item; and that piece of business was the means of bringing Fraisier a good many other clients: so that he has his hands quite full of business now; though, I must admit, it is of much the same description as my own—there isn't much to choose between his connection and mine—"

"It is only the just as suffers here be-

low!" replied the portress. "Well, good-by and thank you, my dear Monsieur Poulain."

And now begins the drama—or (if you will) the tragi-comedy—of the death of an old bachelor who, by the irresistible force of circumstances, has become the helpless prey of the avaricious beings now grouped around his dying bed.

Leagued and allied with them are the keenest of all passions—the passion of the picture-maniac, the greed of Fraisier (the portrait of whom, as he appeared in his den, will make you shudder), and the thirst for gold of an Auvergnat, who, to become a capitalist, was prepared for anything, even crime. This, the earlier portion of my narrative serves, in some sort, as an introduction to this tragi-comedy, while the *dramatis personæ* include all the characters who have hitherto occupied the stage.

XVIII.

A MAN OF LAW.

Among odd freaks of custom, the debasement of words is one that would require volumes for its explanation. Write to a solicitor, styling him a *homme de loi*, and you will offend him as gravely as you would a colonial merchant were you to send him a letter addressed: Monsieur So-and-so, Grocer. There are a great many men of the world — and they surely ought to be perfectly familiar with these subtle technicalities of the art of living; since, if they are ignorant of these, they are ignorant of all things—who are entirely unaware that to call an author a *homme de lettres* is the most galling insult that you can offer him. The word monsieur is the most striking example of the life and death of words. Monsieur means monseigneur. This title, monsieur, which was formerly so important (and is still, when transformed from *sieur* into *sire*, reserved exclusively for monarchs), is now applied to everybody; although, strange to say, messire (which is nothing more than the word monsieur doubled, and is its equivalent) provokes indignant articles in the Republican journals when it occurs in an invitation to a funeral. *Magistrats, conseillers, jurisconsultes, juges, avocats, officiers ministériels, avoués, huissiers, conseils, hommes d'affaires, agents d'affaires,* and *défenseurs* — such are the various species into which the class of persons who administer the law and carry its decisions into operation are divided. The two lowest rungs of this legal ladder are the *practicien* and the *homme de loi*. The *practicien*, who is vulgarly called *recors* (bum-bailiff), is the fortuitous *homme de justice*; his office is to assist in the execution of the sentence in a civil suit; he may be called the casual common hangman of the civil courts.

As for the *homme de loi*, he is the very opprobrium of the profession. He is in the legal what the *homme de lettres* is in the literary world. The competition which consumes every profession in France has invented a corresponding set of disparaging terms. Every vocation has its appropriate stigma. The contempt which brands the expressions *homme de lettres* and *homme de loi* does not, however, extend to their plurals. One may use the terms *les gens de lettres, les gens de loi* without wounding anybody's feelings. But to resume; at Paris each profession has its Omegas—persons who lower the calling to the level of the streets—the level of the lowest ranks. The *homme de loi*, the pettifogging agent, accordingly still exists in certain quarters of the town; just as the market has its petty usurer who stands in the same relative position to the princes of the banking world as Monsieur Fraisier did to the Society of Avoues. Strange as it may seem, the common people are as reluctant to resort to the ministerial officers of the law as they are to enter a fashionable restaurant; on the other hand, they repair to the agent as readily as to the pot-house.

There is one general law for every social sphere—the law of equality. It is only the choicest spirits that delight in

scaling the summits of society; who do not suffer when they find themselves in the presence of their superiors: who make good their footing much as Beaumarchais secured his, by dropping the watch of the *grand seigneur* who was trying to make him feel his inferiority. Hence the successful adventurer, especially the adventurer who leaves behind him every fragment of the swaddling clothes in which he once was wrapped, is a colossal exception to the general rule.

Six o'clock the next morning found Madame Cibot in the Rue de la Perle, examining the house which sheltered her future legal adviser, the Sieur Fraisier, the *homme de loi*. It was one of those old houses which the *petite bourgeoisie* of bygone days used to live in. The entrance to the house lay through a passage. The ground-floor (part of which was taken up by the porter's lodge and by the shop of a cabinet-maker whose work-rooms and warehouses trenched upon a small interior court) was cut in two by the passage and the staircase, whose walls were so damp and so incrusted with saltpeter that the house appeared to be suffering from leprosy.

Madame Cibot went straight to the lodge, where she found one of Cibot's brother-porters—a shoe-maker—together with his wife and two young children, all packed into a space of ten feet square, which was lighted only by a window looking on to the little court. When once Dame Cibot had announced her name and calling, and mentioned her house in the Rue de Normandie, it was not long ere a thorough understanding was established between the two women. After a quarter of an hour's gossip, during which Monsieur Fraisier's portress was preparing breakfast for the shoe-maker and the two children, Madame Cibot turned the conversation on to the subject of the inmates of the house, and mentioned the *homme de loi*.

"I am come to consult him on business," said she; "one of his friends, Doctor Poulain, said as he would mention my name to Monsieur Fraisier. You know Doctor Poulain, don't you?"

"I should think I did!" said the portress of the Rue de la Perle. "He saved my little girl when she had the croup."

"Ay, and he saved me too, madame. What sort of a man might this Monsieur Fraisier be?"

"He's a man from whom we find it no easy matter to get the money we've paid for the postage of his letters when the end of the month comes, my good lady."

The intelligent Dame Cibot required no further answer.

"It's possible to be poor and n'honest," said she.

"I should hope so," replied Fraisier's portress; "*we* are not rolling in gold or silver, no, nor yet in copper, neither; but we don't owe a farthing to any soul alive."

This was a kind of language which Madame Cibot was quite at home in.

"Well, my dear," she pursued, "I suppose I can trust him, can't I?"

"Ah, indeed you can; when Monsieur Fraisier wants to do any one a good turn, I've heard Madame Florimond say that he hasn't his fellow—"

"Then, why didn't she marry him?" asked Dame Cibot, with emphasis, "since she owed her fortune to him? It's something for a woman as keeps a small haberdasher's shop to become the wife of a n'advocate—"

"Why, indeed?" said the portress, as she led Madame Cibot into the passage. "You are going up to see him, aren't you, madame? Well! when you get into his room you'll know the reason why!"

The staircase, which was lighted by sash-windows looking on to a small court, revealed the fact that with the exception of the landlord and the Sieur Fraisier, the inmates of the house were engaged in mechanical operations. The muddy stairs, strewed with shreds of copper, broken buttons, scraps of gauze, and fragments of esparto grass, disclosed the nature of the several trades that were carried on in the house, while the walls of the upper stories were disfigured with caricatures—the handiwork of the apprentices.

The last words of the portress had excited Madame Cibot's curiosity, and had

thus naturally determined her to consult Dr. Poulain's friend. Whether she should employ him or not was a question, the decision of which she reserved until she had seen him.

"I sometimes ask myself how Madame Sauvage can bear to remain in his service," said the portress, by way of commentary, as she followed Madame Cibot upstairs; "I am going up with you, madame," she added, "for I am taking the landlord's milk and his newspaper up to his apartments."

On reaching the second story above the entresol, Dame Cibot found herself before a most disreputable-looking door of a dubious red color, and incaked to the width of about two inches and a half with that dark-brown layer of dirt that results from the oft-repeated application of the hand, and forms an eye-sore which the architect has endeavored to banish from elegant apartments by placing plates of glass above and below the keyholes. The wicket of this door was so clogged with rubbish resembling that which restaurateurs have devised in order to give an appearance of age to bottles which are still in their early youth, that it served no other end than that of procuring for the door the nickname of prison-door — a nickname, by the way, that was thoroughly in keeping with the club-shaped iron bindings, formidable hinges and large-headed nails with which the door was garnished. These appendages must have been invented by some miser or by some pamphleteer at feud with the whole world.

When Madame Cibot pulled the greasy olive-shaped handle of the door-bell its faint tinkle showed that the bell-metal was cracked. Indeed, every object was in perfect harmony with the broad outlines of this hideous picture. The sound of heavy footsteps and the asthmatic breathing of a portly woman now fell upon the ear of Madame Cibot, and lo! Madame Sauvage appeared! Madame Sauvage was exactly like one of those old hags whom Adrien Brauwer has invented for his "Witches starting for Sunday." She was five feet six; her face had a military aspect, and was far more hairy than Dame Cibot's. Madame Sauvage was morbidly stout, wore a hideous dress of cheap cotton, wrapped her head in a turban, still put her hair in curl-papers made out of the printed circulars received by her employer, and adorned her ears with rings or rather cart-wheels of gold. This female Cerberus held in her hand a battered tin saucepan. The various odors of the staircase received an addition to their number from the spilled milk; but this last odor, in spite of its sickening acridity, was almost imperceptible among so many smells.

"And what might your pleasure be, medeme?" inquired Madame Sauvage; and as she put the question, the deadly look she cast at Madame Cibot was intensified by the appearance of her chronically bloodshot eyes. The fact is that Dame Cibot was too well dressed to please Madame Sauvage.

"Monsieur Fraisier's friend, Doctor Poulain, has sent me here to see Monsieur Fraisier."

"Walk in, medeme," replied Dame Sauvage, with a sudden access of politeness, which showed that she had been forewarned of this early call. And, after having dropped a theatrical courtesy, the semi-masculine servant of Sieur Fraisier abruptly threw open the door of the study that looked on to the street, and in which the quondam solicitor of Mantes was seated.

This study was an exact counterpart of those small offices of third-rate bailiffs where the pigeon-holes are of blackened wood, where the papers have lain so long undisturbed that, in the language of the clerks' room, they have grown beards; where the red tape droops dejectedly; where the paper-cases bear traces of the gambols of mice, while the floor is gray with dust, and the ceiling yellow with smoke.

All tarnished was the pier-glass in Monsieur Fraisier's study, and meager was the log of wood that rested on the cast-iron firedogs. The time-piece, of modern marquetry work, had evidently been picked up at some execution sale, and

was worth about sixty francs. The design of the chimney-candlesticks that flanked the time-piece was a clumsy rococo, and the zinc of which they were composed peeped through its coat of paint in several places.

Monsieur Fraisier himself was a lean, unhealthy little man with a rubicund face, whose pustules betrayed the unwholesome condition of his blood. He had an inveterate habit of scratching his right arm, and his wig was placed so far back upon his head as to disclose a large area of brick-colored cranium of most forbidding aspect.

On Madame Cibot's entrance Fraisier rose from the cane armchair in which he was sitting on a round cushion of green morocco, and assuming an engaging air and a honeyed tone of voice, remarked, as he brought forward a chair: "Madame Cibot, I believe?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the portress, whose ordinary self-possession had entirely deserted her. She was daunted by the timbre of his voice, which was not unlike that of the door-bell, and by a glance that was greener even than the greenish eyes of her future counsel.

Madame Cibot was now no longer at a loss to understand why Madame Florimond had declined the honor of becoming Madame Fraisier.

"Poulain has mentioned your name to me, my dear madame," said the *homme de loi*, in that affected tone which is popularly called *petite voix*, and which, in spite of all his efforts to soften it, remained harsh and thin as common country wine.

As he uttered these words, the man of law endeavored to adjust his habiliments by drawing the skirts of his dressing-gown over his bony knees, which were cased in excessively threadbare swanskin. The dressing-gown in question was old, and here and there its lining impertinently peeped through the rents in the printed calico of which it was made. In spite of Fraisier's efforts the weight of the lining dragged the skirts of the gown apart, and thus exposed to view a close-fitting flannel vest, black with long wear. With a somewhat coxcombical air, Fraisier proceeded to tie the cord of the refractory dressing-gown tightly round his waist, so as to display his reed-like figure; then taking up the tongs, he effected a junction between a pair of brands that, like two brothers who have had a quarrel, had long been disunited; then finally, as if some thought had suddenly occurred to him, he jumped up from his seat and called out:

"Madame Sauvage!"

"Well, what is it?"

"I am not at home to anybody."

"Well, you needn't tell me that," replied that virago, in a commanding tone of voice.

"It is my old wet-nurse," said the disconcerted man of law.

"Old and inweterate ugly still," replied the ex-heroine of the market.

Fraisier laughed at the pun, and proceeded to bolt the door, in order that his housekeeper might not come in and interrupt Dame Cibot's confidential communications.

"Well, madame, will you be good enough to explain your business to me," said Fraisier, seating himself, and still endeavoring to adjust his dressing-gown. "A person who comes to me with a recommendation from the only friend I have in the world, may rely upon me—ay—implicitly."

Madame Cibot harangued for a quarter of an hour without any, even the slightest, interruption, from the man of law, whose air was precisely that of a recruit listening, with both ears, to a veteran of the old guard. This silence and submissiveness on the part of Fraisier, and the attention which he paid to the cataract of talk (of which we have had samples in the scenes between Cibot and poor Pons) induced the suspicious portress to lay aside some of the prejudice which so many repulsive details had instilled into her mind. When, at length, she had finished her narrative and was waiting for some advice, the little lawyer, who all this time had been studying his future client with his green, black-speckled eyes, was seized with a churchyard cough, and was obliged

to have recourse to a delf bowl half full of herb-juice, which he completely drained.

"But for Poulain I should, ere now, have been in my grave, my dear Madame Cibot," remarked Fraisier, by way of answer to the motherly glances of the portress; "but he tells me he will restore me to health—"

The man of law seemed to have entirely forgotten all the confidences of his client, who now began to think of leaving so confirmed a valetudinarian to his own devices.

"Madame," resumed the whilom solicitor of Mantes with a sudden access of seriousness, "where a succession is in question there are two points to be considered; first, whether the estate be worth the trouble one is about to take; and secondly, who are the lawful heirs; for, if the succession be the booty, the heirs represent the foe."

Thereupon Dame Cibot brought Remonencq and Elie Magus into play, and stated that those two cunning confederates valued the collection of pictures at six hundred thousand francs.

"Are they prepared to give that amount for it?" asked the former solicitor of Mantes; "for, do you see, madame, we men of business don't believe in pictures; a picture, look you, is two francs' worth of canvas or a hundred thousand francs' worth of painting! Now, the pictures which are worth a hundred thousand francs are well known; and what grand mistakes have been made with regard to all, even the most celebrated, valuables of this kind! Why, a well-known financier, whose gallery was bepraised, visited, even engraved, *engraved!* mark you, was thought to have expended millions on his collection; he dies (for die one must) well, his *genuine* pictures realized only two hundred thousand francs! You must bring these gentlemen to me. Now what about the heirs?"

So saying, Fraisier resumed his attentive attitude. When he heard the name of President Camusot, he shook his head and made a grimace which riveted the attention of Dame Cibot; she tried to read that brow, that atrocious physiognomy, and found it nothing but what we call in business a *tête de bois*.

"Yes, my dear sir," repeated Dame Cibot, "my Monsieur Pons is own cousin to President Camusot de Marville; he reminds me of the relationship twice a day. The first wife of Monsieur Camusot, the silk mercer—"

"Who has just been made a peer of France—"

"Was a Demoiselle Pons, cousin-german to Monsieur Pons."

"They are first cousins once removed—"

"They're nothing whatever to each other now; they've had a fall out."

Now Monsieur Camusot de Marville, before he came to Paris, had been for five years president of the tribunal at Mantes; and had done more than leave behind him in that town the mere recollection of his name; he had kept up a connection with the place in the person of the judge with whom, of all the judges of his court, he had been most intimate. The judge in question had succeeded Camusot in the presidency of the court; and was its president still. To him, therefore, Fraisier was thoroughly well known.

"Are you aware, madame," said Fraisier, when Dame Cibot had closed the ruddy flood-gates of her impetuous mouth, "are you aware that you would have for your principal antagonist a man who has it in his power to send people to the scaffold?"

At these words the portress started up from her chair as if she had been a Jack-in-the-box.

"Calm yourself, my dear lady," resumed Fraisier. "That you should not know what powers a president of the criminal division of the Parisian Court Royal possesses is perfectly natural, but you *ought* to have been aware that Monsieur Pons has a legal heir natural. Monsieur de Marville is the one sole heir of your patient; but he is collateral heir in the third degree; hence Monsieur Pons may, without infringing the law, dispose of his fortune as he pleases. You are also ignorant of the fact that the daughter of

President Camusot was married at least six weeks ago to the eldest son of Count Popinot, peer of France, and ex-minister of agriculture and commerce—one of the most influential statesmen of the day. This matrimonial alliance renders the president still more formidable than he would be as sovereign of the Assize Court merely."

Again did Madame Cibot quake when she heard this phrase.

"Yes, 'tis he who sends people to that place," pursued Fraisier; "ah, my dear lady, you don't know what a red robe is! It is bad enough, in all conscience, to have a plain black gown arrayed against one! If you behold me here ruined, bald, half dead; why 'tis because I unwittingly offended an insignificant provincial procurator-royal. I was compelled to sell my practice at a sacrifice, and was only too glad to escape with the loss of my fortune only. Had I taken it into my head to offer any resistance, I should have had my advocate's gown stripped off my back. You have still something more to learn, and it is this: had we to deal with President Camusot single-handed, *that* would be a mere trifle; but, let me tell you, President Camusot *has a wife;* and, if you found yourself face to face with that wife, you would tremble as much as if your foot were on the first step of the scaffold; the very hairs of your head would stand on end. So revengeful is Madame Camusot that she would spend ten years in entangling you in some snare which would be your ruin. She sets her husband to work just as a child will spin a top. In the course of her life she has caused a charming young man to commit suicide in the Conciergerie; completely whitewashed a count who was charged with forgery, and well-nigh brought about the interdiction of one of the greatest noblemen of the court of Charles X. Her latest exploit was to procure the dismissal of Monsieur Granville, the attorney-general—"

"The gentleman what lived in the Vieille Rue du Temple at the corner of the Rue Saint Francois?" asked Dame Cibot.

"The very same. They say she wants to get her husband made Minister of Justice, and I don't know that she won't succeed. If she took it into her head to send the pair of us to the Assize Court, and thence to the galleys, I—*I*, who am as innocent as the unborn babe—would get a passport and go to the United States; so well do I know what *justice* is. Now, my dear Madame Cibot, the president's wife, in order to secure for her only daughter the hand of young Viscount Popinot (who, they say, is to be the heir of your landlord, Monsieur Pillerault), has so entirely stripped herself of her fortune that she and her husband are now obliged to live upon the bare salary of the president. And *do* you, my dear lady, imagine that, under these circumstances, Madame Camusot will allow the succession of your Monsieur Pons to slip through her fingers? Why, I would rather face a battery of guns charged with grape-shot than have such a woman for my adversary—"

"But they've had a split," interposed Dame Cibot.

"What does that matter?" replied Fraisier. "All the more reason why she should look after the money. To kill a relative against whom one has a grievance is—something; but to come in for his fortune is—delightful!"

"But the good man hates his heirs. He keeps on telling me that these folks—I remember their names, Monsieur Cardot, Monsieur Berthier, etc. — have crushed him as if he had been an egg under a dung-cart."

"Have you a fancy to be crushed like that?"

"My God! my God!" exclaimed the portress. "Ah! well might Madame Fontaine say as I should meet with difficulties; but still she told me as I should succeed—"

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot; as to your getting a matter of thirty thousand francs, it is possible you may; but as to the succession, you mustn't even think of it. We talked your affair over—Doctor Poulain and I—yesterday evening—"

Here, Madame Cibot made another bound upon her chair.

"Well, well! what is the matter with you?"

"Why, if you knew all about my business, why did you let me jabber away like a magpie?"

"Madame Cibot; I knew all about your business, but I knew nothing about Madame Cibot! So many clients, so many characters—"

On hearing these words Madame Cibot looked at her future adviser with a peculiar look—a look which divulged all her suspicions and by no means escaped the notice of Fraisier.

XIX.

FRAISIER'S POINT.

"To resume, then," said Fraisier, "our friend Poulain was introduced by you to old Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of Madame Popinot—that is one of your claims to my good offices. Now, mark what I say; Poulain goes to see your landlord once a fortnight, and it is from him that the doctor learned all these details. The retired merchant was present at the wedding of his great-grandnephew (for he is an uncle who has a fortune to leave, let me tell you; he has a good fifteen thousand francs a year, and for the last five-and-twenty years has lived the life of a monk; he spends barely three thousand francs per annum). Well, he it was who told Poulain all about the marriage. It would seem that all this shindy was entirely caused by your worthy musician himself, from a feeling of spite against the president's family. He who listens to one bell only hears but one sound: now your invalid protests that he is innocent, but the world regards him as a monster."

"And a monster he may well be for n'aught I know; it wouldn't surprise me one bit," exclaimed Dame Cibot. "Only just fancy; here have I been a-spending my own money on him any time these last ten years, as he well knows; all my savings he has, and he won't put me down for n'a penny in his will; no, sir, that he won't; he's that stubborn he's a reg'lar mule. Here have I been a-talking to him on the subject for the last ten days, and the lubber won't budge a single inch, no, not no more than if he was a lottery *terne.* He just keeps his teeth clinched, and looks at me just as if—Why the most he's said to me, was as he'd recommend me to Monsieur Schmucke."

"Then it is his intention to make a will in favor of this Schmucke, is it?"

"He'll give him everything—"

"Listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot; I must, in order to form a definitive opinion and a plan, get to know Monsieur Schmucke, see the objects of which the estate consists, and have a conference with the Jew you speak of; and then allow me to be your guide—"

"We will see about it, my good Monsieur Fraisier."

"What do you mean by: 'we will see about it?'" cried Fraisier, darting a viper glance at Dame Cibot, and speaking in his natural tone of voice. "Come now! am I or am I not your counsel? Let us thoroughly understand one another."

Dame Cibot saw that she was found out, and felt a cold shiver run down her back. Seeing that she was at the mercy of a tiger she said: "You have my n'entire confidence."

"We solicitors are accustomed to the treachery of our clients. Now examine your position well; it is superb. If you follow my advice to the letter, you will have twenty or thirty thousand francs out of this estate, I warrant you. But there is another side to this beautiful medal. Suppose that Madame Camusot should learn that Monsieur Pons's estate is worth a million francs, and that you want to get a slice of it—for there are always persons to be found who take upon them to say things of this kind—" added Fraisier, parenthetically.

This parenthesis, preceded and followed by a pause, made Dame Cibot shiver—she jumped to the conclusion that Fraisier

himself would undertake the office of informer.

"In that case, my dear client, in ten minutes old Pillerault would be prevailed on to turn you out of the lodge, and you would have a couple of hours to pack up your traps."

"What odds would that be to me?" said Dame Cibot, starting to her feet and assuming a Bellona attitude. "I should remain with the two gentlemen n'as their confidential housekeeper."

"Yes, and that being so, a trap would be laid for you, and you would wake up some fine morning to find yourself in a cell, you and your husband, charged with some capital crime—"

"*Me,*" cried Dame Cibot, "*me,* as don't owe nobody a single centime, *me! me!*—"

And she went on speaking for five minutes, while Fraisier watched the grand artist as she executed her *concerto* of self-laudation. He was cool and satirical; his eye pierced Dame Cibot as if it had been a stiletto; he laughed inwardly, and, as he laughed, his dry wig quivered. He was Robespierre, the Robespierre of the days when that Gallic Sylla wrote quatrains.

"And why, and wherefore, and on what pretext?" asked Dame Cibot in conclusion.

"Do you wish to know how you might come to be guillotined—?"

Pale as a corpse, Dame Cibot sunk back into her chair; for these words fell, as if they had been the blade of the law itself, upon her neck. She stared at Fraisier with bewildered eyes.

"Now listen to me attentively, my dear child," resumed Fraisier, suppressing all outward expression of the satisfaction that he derived from his client's terror.

"I would rather let the whole thing rest—" murmured Madame Cibot, making an effort to rise, when Fraisier imperiously interposed:

"Stop," said he. "You ought to be informed of the risk you run; it is my duty to give you the benefit of my knowledge. Well then, let us take it that you are dismissed by Monsieur Pillerault; there can be no doubt of that, can there? You enter the service of these two gentlemen; good! That in itself is a declaration of war between Madame Camusot and you. You on your part are determined to do your utmost to get hold of this succession, to make something out of it by hook or by crook—"

Here Dame Cibot made a gesture of dissent.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you; that's no part of my business," said Fraisier in answer to his client's gesture. "But this enterprise is a combat, and you will be induced to go to greater lengths than you imagine. Under such circumstances, people get intoxicated with their own idea; they hit hard—"

Here Madame Cibot indulged in another gesture of repudiation, and drew herself up.

"Come, come now, little mother," pursued Fraisier, with horrible familiarity, "you would go great lengths now, you *know* you would—"

"Oh! then you take me for a thief, do you?"

"Come now, mother, you have an I O U of Monsieur Schmucke's that cost you very little. Ah! ah! you see, you're at confession here, my pretty dame. Don't deceive your confessor, especially when that confessor has the power of reading your very heart."

Dame Cibot was terrified at the perspicacity of this man; she now clearly perceived the motive of the profound attention with which he had listened to her.

"Well!" resumed Fraisier, "you need not hesitate to admit that, in this race for a fortune, Madame Camusot will not suffer herself to be outstripped by you. You will be watched; spies will be set upon your actions. You carry your point and are mentioned in Monsieur Pons's will—granted. Nothing could be better. But one fine day in walks Madame Law and collars some barley water, at the bottom of which some arsenic is found; you and your husband are arrested, tried—condemned, for having attempted to murder Monsieur Pons, in order that you might pocket your legacy. I once defended a

poor woman at Versailles, who was to the full as innocent as you would be in the case supposed; matters stood exactly as I have just stated them; and yet, all that I could do for her was just to save her from the scaffold; the poor wretch was condemned to twenty years' hard labor, and is now at Saint Lazare undergoing her sentence!"

The terror of Madame Cibot had now reached its climax. Pale and haggard, she kept her eyes fixed upon the lean little green-eyed lawyer, much as the poor Moorish woman, convicted of infidelity to her religion, must have gazed at the inquisitor when she heard herself sentenced to be burned alive.

"You say, then, dear Monsieur Fraisier, that by leaving of matters entirely in your hands, and n'intrusting the care of my n'interests to you, I should come in for something, without having anything to fear?"

"I guarantee you thirty thousand francs," said Fraisier, with the assured air of a man who perfectly well knows what he is talking about.

"And, after all," resumed Dame Cibot in her most wheedling tones, "you knows how fond I am of dear Dr. Poulain; it was him as told me to come to you, and sure I am the worthy man didn't send me here to be told as I'm going to be guillotined for poisoning people."

Here Madame Cibot burst into a flood of tears; for this vision of the guillotine had made her very blood run cold; her nerves were in a state of agitation; her heart sunk within her; she entirely lost her head. Fraisier, on the other hand, enjoyed his triumph. When he had seen his client hesitating, he felt that this piece of business was on the point of slipping through his fingers, and resolved to tame Madame Cibot, to terrify her, to stun her, to bind her hand and foot, and have her entirely under his control. The portress, having stepped into that study (as a fly throws itself into a spider's web) was doomed to remain there, entrammeled and enmeshed, to feed the ambition of this little *homme de loi*. In fact, Fraisier was resolved to extract, from this piece of business, money enough to live upon in his old age, independence, enjoyment, and social consideration. He and Poulain, on the previous evening, had maturely weighed and carefully—microscopically—examined the whole matter; the doctor had informed his friend Fraisier what manner of man Schmucke was, and the active minds of Fraisier and Poulain had tested every hypothesis, and scanned each favorable feature of the enterprise, and each attendant risk. "The fortunes of both of us are involved in this business!" Fraisier had exclaimed in a paroxysm of enthusiasm; and he had promised Poulain the post of chief physician to some hospital, and himself the post of *juge de paix* to the arrondissement.

To become a *juge de paix!* was, to this man of great capacity, to this doctor of laws in want of socks, a chimera so difficult to mount, that he thought of it as the advocate who has fought his way into the chamber of deputies thinks of the robe of the chancellor, as the Italian priest thinks of the tiara. 'Twas a mania! Monsieur Vitel, the *juge de paix* in whose court Fraisier practiced was a valetudinarian of sixty-nine, and talked about retiring. Fraisier would chat to Poulain about succeeding Monsieur Vitel, much as Poulain would chat to Fraisier about the wealthy heiress whom Poulain was to rescue from the jaws of death, and marry. Few persons have even the remotest idea how keen is the competition for those places the occupation of which is compatible with residence in Paris. To live in Paris is a universal wish. Does a licensed tobacco-shop or a stamp-shop fall vacant? A hundred women rise, like one man, and set all their friends in motion, in order to obtain the berth! Is there a probability of a vacancy in one of the four-and-twenty tax-collectorships of the metropolis? There is a tumult of rival ambitions in the chamber of deputies! These places are filled up by the council; nominations to them are affairs of state! Now the annual salary of a *juge de paix* at Paris is about six thousand francs. The registry attached to this tribunal is

a post worth a hundred thousand francs. It is of all judicial offices one of the most eagerly coveted. Fraisier, once appointed a *juge de paix*, and having the chief physician of some hospital for a friend, would be certain to find a rich wife for himself, and a wife for Doctor Poulain also; they would lend each other a helping hand in turn. Night had passed its leaden roller over all the thoughts of the former solicitor of Mantes; a formidable scheme had germinated in his mind—a prolific scheme fertile in harvests and abounding in intrigues. Of this drama Dame Cibot was the mainspring; so that it was absolutely necessary that the revolt of this instrument should be suppressed. That revolt was unexpected; but, as we have seen, the quondam solicitor, by exerting all the powers of his maleficent nature, had brought the audacious portress to his feet.

"Come now, my dear Madame Cibot, dismiss your fears," said he, taking her hand in his. The touch of this hand, which was as cold as the skin of a snake, produced a terrible impression on the portress, and brought about a physical reaction which subdued her mental emotion. She thought that Ashtaroth, Madame Fontaine's toad, would be less dangerous to handle than this jar of poisons, capped with a reddish wig and speaking with the voice of a creaking door.

"Don't suppose that I am causing you unnecessary alarm," resumed Fraisier, after noting this new gesture of repugnance on the part of Madame Cibot. "The affairs which have procured Madame Camusot so terrible a reputation are so perfectly well known at the palace, that you can ask any one you please about them. The great nobleman, who was within an ace of being interdicted, is the Marquis d'Espard. 'Twas the Marquis d'Esgrignon whom she rescued from the galleys. The young man who—rich, handsome, full of promise, and on the eve of marriage with a young lady belonging to one of the first families in France—committed suicide by hanging himself in one of the cells of the Conciergerie, was the celebrated Lucien de Rubempre, whose case caused a ferment throughout the whole of Paris at the time. There, too, it was a question as to a succession—the succession of a kept mistress, the famous Esther, who left several millions behind her. This young man was accused of having poisoned her, for he was appointed heir under her will. Yet the young poet was not in Paris when the girl died; he did not even know that he was her heir!—it is impossible to be more innocent than that. Well, after being subjected to an interrogatory by M. Camusot, the young man hanged himself in his cell. The Law resembles Medicine; it has its victims. In the former case one dies for Society; in the latter, for Science," said Fraisier with a ghastly smile. "Well! you see that I know the danger. Law has already ruined *me*—*me*, a poor obscure little solicitor. My experience has cost me dear; it is entirely at your service—"

"In faith, no thank you," said Dame Cibot; "I'll give up everything. I shall have made an ungrateful man the more—I only wants my due! I've a thirty years' character for n'honesty, monsieur. My Monsieur Pons says that he'll recommend me in his will to his friend Schmucke; very well, I'll end my days in peace, in the service of that worthy German—"

Fraisier was overshooting the mark; he had discouraged Dame Cibot, and found himself obliged to efface the terrible impression that had been made upon her.

"Don't let us despair of anything," said he; "go quietly home; it's all right; we will steer the matter into a safe port!"

"But what am I to do, then, good Monsieur Fraisier, in order that I may n'have an annuity and—?"

"—No remorse," said Fraisier emphatically, taking the words out of Dame Cibot's mouth. "Why, it is precisely for that purpose that professional men were invented. In these cases, there's nothing to be gained unless you keep within the limits of the law. You don't know the law; *I* do. Under my guid-

ance you will have legality on your side; you will hold your own unmolested, so far as mankind are concerned; for as to your conscience, that is your own lookout."

"Well, say on," replied Dame Cibot, whom this language had rendered not only inquisitive but cheerful.

"I don't know what to say; I have not studied the possibilities of the case; I have confined my attention to its difficulties. Your first care, look you, must be to get the will made, and in so doing you will not be on the wrong track; but before all, let us know in whose favor Pons will dispose of his fortune, for if it should turn out that you are his heiress—"

"No, no, he doesn't love me! Ah! if I had only known the value of his baubles, and what he told me n'about his love affairs, I should be quite easy in my mind to-day—"

"Well," said Fraisier, "pursue your course, all the same. Dying folks take strange fancies into their heads, my dear Madame Cibot; they cheat many an expectation. Let him make his will, and we'll see what is to be done afterward. But, first of all, we must get the objects composing the inheritance valued. So, do you introduce me to the Jew and this Remonencq; they will be extremely serviceable to us. Repose every confidence in me, I am entirely yours. I am the friend of my client, ay, up to the very hilt, when that client is friendly to me. I am either friend or foe; that's my character."

"Very well, I shall place myself quite in your hands," said Dame Cibot; "and as to your fees, Monsieur Poulain will—"

"Oh, don't mention them," said Fraisier. "Take care to keep Poulain in attendance on the patient; the doctor is one of the most honest and one of the most upright men I know; and, look you, we are in need of a man there whom we can rely on. Poulain is a better man than I; I have grown wicked."

"You look like it," said Dame Cibot; "but for my part, *I* would trust you—"

"And you would do rightly!" replied Fraisier; "come and see me whenever anything turns up, and keep your course; you are a clever woman, and all will go well."

"Good-by, dear Monsieur Fraisier; and wishing you good health. Your servant."

Fraisier escorted his client to the door of his apartments. There, he did as the doctor had done on the preceding evening; he clinched the matter in a parting word to the portress.

"If you could manage to get Monsieur Pons to ask for my advice, that would be a great step in advance."

"I'll try," replied Dame Cibot.

"My jolly dame," replied Fraisier, leading the portress back into his study, "I am well acquainted with Monsieur Trognon, the notary; he is the notary of the district; if Monsieur Pons has no notary, mention Monsieur Trognon; insure his being selected."

"I take you," replied Dame Cibot.

As she withdrew, she overheard the rustling of a dress, and the sound of heavy footsteps, that would gladly have rendered themselves light. When she found herself alone in the street once more and had walked a certain distance, she regained her liberty of thought. Although she could not entirely shake off the influence of this conference, and although she still stood in great awe of the scaffold, the law, and the judges, she came to a very natural determination—a determination the effect of which would be to place her in a position of tacit antagonism to her formidable adviser.

"What need is there for me to take any one into partnership?" said she to herself. "Let me feather my own nest first; and when I have done that I will accept whatever they offer me for playing their game."

This reflection was (as we shall see) destined to hasten the end of the unfortunate musician.

XX.

DAME CIBOT AT THE THEATER.

"WELL! my dear Monsieur Schmucke," said the portress, as she entered the

rooms of her two gentlemen; "and how is our dear darling of a patient getting on?"

"Nod well," replied the German; "Bons's mind has peen wandering all night long."

"What has he been a-saying, then?"

"Mere nonzenze! Dat he wizhed me to have all his fortune, on condition dat I would zell noding. And den he cried. Boor man! it made me feel quide unhabby!"

"Oh, that will go off! my dear duckie!" replied the portress. "I've kept you a-waiting for your breakfast, seeing as how it's past nine o'clock; but you mustn't scold me; for I've had a heap of matters to attend to on your account, d'ye see. We were out of every blessed thing; so I've been and got a little money!"

"How?" inquired the pianist.

"What about *my uncle*, eh?"

"What ungle?" said Schmucke.

"Why, the scheme!"

"What zgheme?"

"Lord bless the good man! how simple he is, to be sure. No, really, 'pon my word, you're a saint, a love, a n'arch-bishop of innocence, a man as is fit to be stuffed and put under a glass case, as the old actor says. What! d'ye mean to tell me that you've been in Paris these nine-and-twenty years, and seen—let me see—why, you must have seen the Revolution of July, and don't know what the *monde-piété* is?—the office where they lend you money on your rags! I've taken all our silver spoons and forks there, eight of 'em, thread pattern. Bah! Cibot can use Algerian metal at his meals; it's quite the fashion, as the saying is. And it's not worth while a-saying anything about the business to our dear cherub; it 'ud only worrit him and make him turn yellow; and he's quite fretful enough as it is. Let's save him first, and see what's to be done n'afterward. We must take things n'as they come—war times, war measures; ain't I right?"

"Goot woman, nople heart!" exclaimed the poor musician, as he took Dame Cibot's hand and pressed it to his heart, while the expression of his features showed that he was deeply touched. This angel of goodness raised his eyes to heaven: they were full of tears.

"Drop that, father Schmucke. You n'are quite absurd. That's a pretty thing to make a fuss about, that is! Why, I'm a n'old daughter of the people I am, I carry my heart in my hand. I've plenty of *that*, d'ye see," exclaimed she, clapping her hand to her bosom; "just like you two gentlemen, which you're hearts of gold."

"*Fader Schmucke*," echoed the musician; "nay, after ganging de fery deps of zorrow ant weebing tears of bloot, to mount into de heavens, it is too moche for me! I shall not surfife Bons—"

"In faith, I verily believe you; you're a-killing of yourself. Now listen to me, my duckie."

"*Duckie!*" repeated Schmucke.

"Well then, my dear little fellow!"

"*Tear little vellow!*"

"My pippin then, if you like it better."

"It is not de leazt bit blainer."

"Never mind; only let me take care of you and be your guide: or else, if you go on as you're going on now, I shall have two patients on my hands instead of one. In my poor opinion, we ought to do what is to be done here, turn and turn about. You can't go on a-giving lessons in town: it wears you n'out, and makes you fit for nothing here, where we shall have to sit up all night, seeing as how Monsieur Pons is a-getting worse and worse. To-day I'll step round to all your customers and tell 'em as you're ill, eh? Then you can spend the night at the bedside of our poor lamb, and you can get your rest in the morning, from five o'clock till, say, two in the afternoon. *I*'ll do the most tiring part of the work—the day duty; seeing as I *must* get your breakfast and dinner, look after the sick man, get him out of bed, change his linen, and give him his medicine. For really I couldn't hold out ten days longer as I'm a-going on now; and we've been worrited to death for the last month over him. And what on earth would become of you if I was to fall ill? And you, too, there, why it's enough to

frighten anybody to see how you look, along o' sitting up with Monsieur Pons just one night—"

So saying, she led Schmucke to the looking-glass, and Schmucke found that he was indeed much altered.

"Well then, if you agrees to what I say, I'll go and get your breakfast ready in a jiffy. Then you can continue to look after your patient till two o'clock. But in the meantime, give me n'a list of your customers and I'll very soon square matters so as you'll have a fortnight's liberty. When I come back, you can go to bed and rest yourself till the evening."

This suggestion was so full of wisdom that Schmucke forthwith gave in his adhesion to it.

"Not a word to Monsieur Pons; for you know as he'd give himself up for lost if we told him as how that he must knock off going to the theater and giving lessons for a time. The poor man would take it into his head as he'd never get his pupils back again—and a pack o' nonsense—and Monsieur Poulain says as we sha'n't save our Benjamin unless we keeps him as quiet as a mouse."

"Well, well, do you get de breakfast while I go ant brebare de list and giff you de addresses. You are quite right; I zhould suggumb."

An hour after this conversation took place, Madame Cibot, tricked out in all her finery, set off in a *milord,* much to Remonencq's amazement. She reckoned that she would worthily impersonate the confidential housekeeper of the Pair of Nut-Crackers in all the boarding-schools and other establishments wherein the young lady pupils of the two musicians were to be found. It is unnecessary to reproduce the multifarious gossip to which Dame Cibot treated the schoolmistresses and private families that she visited. Suffice it to say that it resembled the variations of a musical theme. We will confine ourselves to the rehearsal of the scene which occurred in the managerial sanctum of the Illustrious Gaudissard, into which the portress succeeded in penetrating, though not without encountering the most stupendous obstacles; for, at Paris, managers of theaters are less easy of access than ministers and kings; nor is it difficult to divine the reason why they raise such formidable barriers between themselves and the common herd of mortals: whereas a king has to protect himself only against ambition, the theatrical manager has to shield himself from the aggressive vanity of the actor and the author!

The intimacy which was very soon struck up between the door-keeper of the theater and Dame Cibot enabled her, however, to clear every gulf. Porters, like all folks who have a common calling, understand one another perfectly. Every condition in life has its shibboleths even as it has its terms of obloquy and badges of disgrace.

"Ah! madame," quoth Dame Cibot, "*you* are portress to the theater; I am only the humble portress of a house in the Rue de Normandie, in which your conductor Monsieur Pons lodges. Ah! how happy I should be n'if I were in your shoes; to see the actors and the ladies of the ballet and the n'authors a-passing in and out! That is, as the old actor said, the field-marshal's baton of our calling."

"And how is worthy Monsieur Pons getting on?" inquired the portress.

"Why, he isn't *getting on* at all; it's now two months since he was out of bed, and he'll leave the house feet foremost, sure enough."

"It will be a great loss—"

"Yes, he's sent me here to explain his position to your manager; try to let me get speech of him, my darling."

"A lady from Monsieur Pons to see you!" Thus did the page who attended the manager's private room announce Madame Cibot, who was recommended to him by the portress. Gaudissard had just arrived at the theater to be present at a rehearsal. As chance would have it, no one wanted to speak with him, and not only the authors of the piece, but the actors and actresses, were late. He was delighted to have news of his conductor, and, with a Napoleonic gesture, indicated to the page that Dame Cibot was to be admitted.

This quondam commercial traveler, now at the head of a much-frequented theater, was cheating his associates in the undertaking. He regarded them very much in the light in which a man regards his lawful wife. The development of his financial talent had reacted on his person. Gaudissard, now grown stout and sturdy, and displaying on his cheeks the heightened color produced by good living and prosperity, had been palpably metamorphosed into a Mondor. "We are becoming a regular Beaujon!" he would say, endeavoring to forestall ridicule by being the first to laugh at himself—"Oh! you are only Turcaret, as yet," replied Bixiou, who often acted as Gaudissard's deputy, in relation to the first lady of the ballet—the celebrated Heloise Brisetout. In short, the ex-ILLUSTRIOUS GAUDISSARD *worked* the theater exclusively, and without the slightest compunction, in his own interests. He had started by collaborating in the production of sundry ballets, vaudevilles and dramatic pieces, and had bought up the interests of his coadjutors for a trifling sum, by taking advantage of those necessities which often hold the author in their relentless grip. Tacked on to dramas which drew, these pieces and vaudevilles brought a few gold coins into Gaudissard's pocket every day; then he contrived, by means of an agent, to make a profit on the sale of tickets, besides appropriating as manager's perquisites a certain number of tickets—enough to enable him to tithe the profits.

These three species of managerial imposts, to say nothing of the sale of boxes and the presents that Gaudissard received from fourth-rate actresses ambitious of playing some insignificant part—that of a page or a queen for example—swelled his third share of the profits to such an extent that his copartners (who were entitled to the other two-thirds) took scarcely a tenth part of the actual returns of the theater. Still even this tenth represented a profit of fifteen per cent on the capital invested. And accordingly, Gaudissard, backed by this dividend of fifteen per cent, prated about his intelligence, his probity, his zeal and the good fortune of his partners. When Count Popinot, with a show of interest in the matter, asked Monsieur Matifat, General Gouraud, son-in-law to Matifat, and Crevel, whether they were satisfied with Gaudissard, Gouraud, who had been made a peer of France, replied:

"They say that he robs us; but he's so witty, and so good a fellow that we are quite contented."

"Then it's the fable of La Fontaine over again," said the former Minister with a smile.

Gaudissard employed his capital in speculations quite unconnected with the theater. He had formed a correct opinion of the Graffs, the Schwabs, and the Brunners, and took shares in the railway schemes projected by their firm. He cloaked his astuteness with the bluff and devil-may-care bearing of the libertine and voluptuary, and seemed to think only of enjoyment and the adornment of his person; but, at the same time, nothing escaped him; and he turned to good account the vast business experience which he had acquired as a bagman. This parvenu, who, even in his own eyes, was little better than a charlatan, lived in a luxurious suite of rooms, which had been arranged for him by the decorator of his theater, and in which he gave suppers and other festive entertainments to the celebrities of the day.

Fond of show and liking to do things handsomely, he affected to be an easy-going man, and seemed all the less formidable, in that he had retained—to use his own expression—the *plating* of his original vocation, while lining that *plating* with the slang of the greenroom. Now theatrical artists when at their theaters are in the habit of calling a spade a spade; Gaudissard, accordingly borrowed from the greenroom—which has a wit of its own—enough good things to enable him, with the help of a rate in aid from the mordant pleasantry of the commercial room, to pass for a superior man. At the time of which we are writing he was thinking of selling his license, and—to employ his own phrase—*passing on to other avocations*. His ambition was to

be managing director of some railway, to become a grave and reverend member of society, to procure some government appointment, and marry Mademoiselle Minard, the daughter of one of the wealthiest mayors in Paris. He hoped to be made a deputy for some place upon *his line*, and to make his way, by means of Popinot's influence, to a seat at the Council of State.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" inquired Gaudissard, arresting, with a managerial glance, the approach of Madame Cibot.

"I am Monsieur Pons's confidential housekeeper, monsieur," replied Dame Cibot.

"Well, and how is the good old fellow getting on?"

"Badly, monsieur, very badly."

"Oh, the devil! the devil! I'm sorry for that. I'll go and see him; for he's one of those exceptional men—"

"Oh! yes, monsieur; a regular angel, to be sure. I still sometimes ask myself how such a man could be in a theater—"

"Why, madame, the theater is a school of morality," said Gaudissard. "Poor Pons—('Pon my word of honor, a man *must* have gone to seed ere he could take up with this creature)— He is a model man; and, as for talent, why— When do you think he will be able to resume his duties? for the theater, unfortunately, resembles the diligences, which, full or empty, start at the appointed times. The curtain here rises at six o'clock every evening, and, let us be as sympathetic as we may, *that* won't produce good music. Come, tell me how he is?"

"Alas! my good sir," said Dame Cibot taking out her handkerchief and applying it to her eyes, "it is very shocking to have to say it, but I believe as we shall have the misfortune to lose him, although we nurse him like the n'apple of our eye —Monsieur Schmucke and me; which indeed I am come to tell you as you must not count upon that good Monsieur Schmucke any longer, for he is going to sit up every night. One can't help going on just as if there was some hope, and a-trying to save the dear good man from dying—but the doctor has given him up—"

"And what is he dying of?"

"Of grief, of the jaundice, of the liver complaint—ay, and all that mixed up with a heap of family matters."

"And of a doctor," said Gaudissard; "he ought to have called in Monsieur Lebrun, our own doctor; that would have cost him nothing—"

"Monsieur Pons has a doctor as is a regular God — but what can a doctor, however clever he may'n be, do against so many causes?"

"I was greatly in need of the worthy Pair of Nut-Crackers for the music of my new fairy piece—"

"Is it anything as I can do for them?" asked Dame Cibot, with an air that would have done no dishonor to Jocrisse.

Gaudissard burst into a roar of laughter.

"Monsieur, I am their confidential housekeeper, and there are a number of things as these gentlemen—"

Hearing Gaudissard's noisy mirth, a woman who was outside exclaimed: "Since you are laughing, one may come in, old man." And with these words, the principal lady of the ballet bounced into the room and flung herself on to the only sofa it contained. This first lady was Heloise Brisetout, who was wrapped in one of those magnificent scarfs which are called Algeriens.

"What is it makes you laugh? Is it this lady? What sort of an engagement is she on the lookout for?" said the *danseuse*, surveying Madame Cibot with one of those glances with which one *artiste* is wont to scan another, and which ought to be transferred to canvas.

Heloise, a young woman who had a great turn for literature, was well known in Bohemia, and was on intimate terms with several great artists, and was endowed with elegance, subtilty, and grace —possessed more wit than is usually allotted to principal ladies of the ballet. As she put her question she applied a vinaigrette to her nose.

"Let me tell you, madame, as all women are equal, when they n'are hand-

some; and if I *don't* sniff the plague out of a smelling-bottle, and if I *don't* put powdered brick-dust on my cheeks—"

"Considering what Nature has already done for you in that direction, that would be an audacious pleonasm, my child!" said Heloise, smirking at the manager.

"I am an honest woman—"

"So much the worse for you," said Heloise. "'Tisn't every one who can get hold of a protector, by jingo; but I have one, madame, and a famous one he is, too!"

"What do you mean by your 'so much the worse?' It's all very fine for you to wear Algeriens on your shoulders and to rig yourself out. But for all that, you'll never receive so many declarations of love as I've had in my time, medeme! And you'll never be a match for the pretty oyster-girl at the Cadran-Bleu."

Here the *danseuse* rose suddenly from her seat, threw herself into the attitude of a soldier porting arms, and carried the back of her right hand to her forehead, as a private soldier does when he salutes his general.

"What!" exclaimed Gaudissard; "are *you* the pretty oyster-girl that my father used to talk to me about?"

"If so, madame knows neither the *cachucha* nor the polka, then? Madame must be over fifty!" said Heloise, assuming a dramatic pose, and declaiming the line:

"Cinna, let us be friends!"

"Come, Heloise, madame is not in trim, leave her alone."

"Is this lady the Nouvelle Heloise?" asked the portress with an air of assumed simplicity that was replete with sarcasm.

"Not bad for the old one!" cried Gaudissard.

"It's as old as the hills," retorted the *danseuse*. "That joke has gray mustaches; find us another, old girl, or—take a cigarette."

"Excuse me, madame," said Dame Cibot; "I am too downhearted to keep the game alive; my two gentlemen are very ill, and in order to provide them with food and spare them worry, I've pawned even my husband's clothes this morning; see, here's the ticket—"

"Oh, now the affair is taking a dramatic turn," cried the fair Heloise. "What is it all about?"

"Madame breaks in upon us like—"

"Like a first lady of the ballet," said Heloise. "You see I am *prompting* you, medeme."

"Come, come, I am pressed for time," cried Gaudissard. "We have had enough nonsense of that sort. This lady, Heloise, is the confidential housekeeper of our poor conductor, who is dying. She is come to tell me that I mustn't count upon his reappearing here; I am in a difficulty—"

"Oh! poor fellow! we must give him a benefit."

"That would be his ruin!" said Gaudissard. "Next morning he might find himself twenty pounds in debt to the infirmaries, which won't recognize the existence in Paris of any other sufferers than those they themselves relieve. No, look here, my good woman, since you are going to compete for the Montyon prize—"

Here Gaudissard interrupted himself to ring the bell, and said to the page who forthwith answered the summons:

"Tell the treasurer to send me a forty-pound note. Take a seat, madame," he added, turning to Madame Cibot.

"Ah! see the poor woman is crying. That's foolish," exclaimed the *danseuse*. "Come now, mother, cheer up, we'll go and see him. I say, you Chinee," said she to the manager, as she drew him aside into a corner of the room, "you mean to give me the chief part in the ballet of 'Ariadne,' don't you? You are going to get married, and you know how I can plague you!"

"Heloise, my heart is like a frigate; it is sheathed with copper."

"I will show the children I have had by you! I will borrow some on purpose!"

"I have made a clean breast of our attachment—"

"Be a good fellow and give Pons's berth to Garangeot; the poor lad has talent, and he is penniless. I promise you peace if you will."

"But wait till Pons is dead; the old fellow may recover yet."

"Oh! as for that, monsieur, certainly not," said Dame Cibot. "Since last night, when his mind began to wander, he's been delirious. Unfortunately, it will soon be all over."

"At all events, let Garangeot fill the post in the interim," said Heloise. "He has the whole of the press at his back."

At this moment in came the treasurer with two twenty-pound notes in his hand.

"Give them to madame," said Gaudissard. "Farewell, my good woman, take good care of the dear fellow, and tell him that I will come to see him to-morrow or the day after—as soon as ever I can."

"A man overboard," cried Heloise.

"Ah! monsieur, hearts like yours are only to be found at theaters. May God bless you!"

"To what account am I to carry this?" inquired the treasurer.

"I will give you a written voucher; carry it to the gratuity account."

Before she left the room, Dame Cibot bowed ceremoniously to the *danseuse*, and overheard Gaudissard address the following question to his former mistress:

"Is Garangeot strong enough, think you, to knock off the music of our ballet, 'The Mohicans,' for me in twelve days? If he gets me out of the fix, he shall be Pons's successor!"

Thus did the portress (who received a larger recompense, for having wrought so much mischief, than she would have derived from the doing of a good action) suppress, at one fell swoop, all the resources of the two friends, and deprive them of their livelihood in case of Pons's restoration to health. This treacherous maneuver was certain to bring about, within a few days, the result which Dame Cibot desired—namely, the sale of the pictures coveted by Elie Magus. In order to realize this preliminary spoliation, it was needful for the portress to lull the formidable ally whom she had called in—the advocate Fraisier, and to insure the absolute silence of Elie Magus and Remonencq. As to the latter, he had gradually succumbed to one of those all-absorbing passions to which the uneducated are liable, when, coming to Paris from the depths of their provinces, they bring with them the fixed ideas engendered by the seclusion of country life, the sordid ignorance of primitive natures, and the crude desires that isolation has converted into domineering tyrants.

The masculine beauty of Madame Cibot, her vivacity and Billingsgate wit, had attracted the attention of the broker, and inspired him with a desire to take her away from Cibot, and make her his concubine—a species of bigamy much more common among the lower orders of Paris than is generally supposed. But avarice, acting like a slip-knot, gained day by day a firmer hold upon the heart, and ended by disturbing the head of Remonencq. Thus, by calculating the commission that was to be paid to Dame Cibot by Elie Magus and himself at forty thousand francs, he became imbued with the desire of making her his lawful spouse, and so o'erleaped the boundary that separates the simple delict from crime. In the course of the long pipe-inspired reveries in which he indulged, seated on his doorstep, he was led, by this purely commercial passion, to long for the death of the little tailor.

If the little tailor died, Remonencq saw, in perspective, his capital wellnigh tripled; and then the thought occurred to him, how excellent a tradeswoman Dame Cibot would make, and what a fine figure she would cut in a magnificent shop upon the boulevard. This twofold covetousness intoxicated Remonencq. He hired an imaginary shop upon the Boulevard de la Madeleine, and filled it with the choicest objects in the collection of the deceased Pons. After having slumbered in golden sheets, and seen millions in the blue spirals of his pipe, he awoke to find himself face to face with the little tailor who was sweeping the court, the gateway, and the pavement in front of the house, while the Auvergnat was taking down the shutters of his shop, and arranging the goods in his window; for since Pons had been laid up, Cibot acted as his wife's substitute in the performance

of those functions which she had taken upon herself. This olive-hued, copper-colored, stumpy little tailor, then, the Auvergnat considered as the only impediment to happiness, and he put to himself the question, "How am I to get rid of him?" This growing passion rendered Dame Cibot extremely proud of herself—for she was verging upon that time of life when women begin to understand that it is possible for them to grow old.

One fine morning, then, as soon as Dame Cibot was up, she fixed a gaze of pensive scrutiny on Remonencq as he was engaged in arranging the knickknacks in his shop-front. She was curious to learn how far his passion for her would carry him.

"Well!" said the Auvergnat, making up to her; "are things going on as you would have them?"

"It's you as makes me uneasy," replied Dame Cibot; "you are getting me into a scrape," she added; "the neighbors will come to notice the sheep's eyes as you make at me."

Thereupon she quitted the gate-way, and plunged into the innermost recesses of Remonencq's shop.

"What an idea!" said the Auvergnat.

"Come here; I want to speak to you," said Dame Cibot. "Monsieur Pons's heirs are astir, and they may cause us a good deal of bother. God only knows what would happen if they was to send a lot of professional men to poke their noses into everything like so many hounds. I can't persuade Monsieur Schmucke to sell a few of the pictures n'unless you love me well enough to keep it dark—oh, so dark that you wouldn't split even if your head was on the block—both as to where the pictures come from and who it was as sold them to you. You know that when once Monsieur Pons is dead and buried, if they find fifty-three pictures instead of sixty-seven, no one'll know how many there were! Besides, if Monsieur Pons sold 'em during his lifetime no one could say a word about it."

"Yes, it's all the same to *me*," replied Remonencq; "but Monsieur Elie Magus will require receipts in regular form."

"Oh, you shall have your receipt too, begging your parding! Do you suppose as it will be me that'll write it out for you? It will be Monsieur Schmucke. But you must tell your Jew to be as mum as you are yourself."

"We will be as mute as fishes. It's quite in the way of our trade. Now, for my part, I can read, but I can't write, and that's why I want a well-taught and clever woman like you for my wife! *I*, who have never thought of anything beyond getting enough to keep me in my old age, should like to have some little Remonencqs now. Give your Cibot the slip—"

"Why, here comes your Jew," said the portress; "now we can arrange matters."

"Well, my dear lady," said Elie Magus, who had been coming every third day to know when he could buy the pictures, "how do we stand now?"

"Haven't you seen any one who has spoken to you about Monsieur Pons and his gewgaws?" asked Dame Cibot.

"I have had a letter from an advocate," replied Elie Magus; "but, as he seemed to me to be a sharp practitioner, who goes in for pettifogging, and I distrust such fellows, I did not answer his letter. At the end of three days he came to see me, and left a card; I told my porter that I should never be 'at home' when that man called."

"Oh, you darling Jew!" said Dame Cibot, who was but imperfectly acquainted with the prudence of Elie Magus. "Well, my little men, in a few days' time I'll cajole Monsieur Schmucke into selling you seven or eight pictures—ten at the outside—but on two conditions; and the first is absolute silence! It'll be Monsieur Schmucke what sent for you, eh, monsieur? It'll be Monsieur Remonencq as suggested to Monsieur Schmucke that you should be the buyer? In short, whatever happens, I shall have had naught to do with the matter. You'll give forty-six thousand francs for the four pictures, eh?"

"So be it," sighed the Jew.

"Very good," said the portress. "The second condition is that you hand over

forty-three thousand francs to me, and that you buy the pictures of Monsieur Schmucke for three thousand francs only. Remonencq here'll buy four for two thousand francs, and will hand me over the balance. But besides that, look you, dear Monsieur Magus, I've been the means of you n'and Remonencq doing a good stroke of business on condition that we all three go shares in the profits. I'll n'introduce this advocate to you; or he will, no doubt, come here if he's asked. You'll value all Monsieur's Pons's belongings at the prices as you can afford to give for 'em, in order that this Monsieur Fraisier may be sure of the value of the property. Only, mind you, he mustn't, on no account, come here before our sale takes place."

"That's understood," said the Jew; "but it will take some time to examine the things and put a price upon them."

"You will have half a day for that. Come, that's my lookout. Talk the matter over and settle it between you, my lads; then the day after to-morrow the thing may be done. I'm a-going to see this here Fraisier and have a chat with him; for he learns all that goes on here through his friend, Dr. Poulain, and it's no light task to keep the beggar quiet."

When Dame Cibot was midway between the Rue de Normandie and the Rue de la Perle she met Fraisier, who was making for her abode; so impatient was he to gather—to use his own phrase—the elements of the affair.

"Why! I was on my way to your place," said Dame Cibot.

Fraisier complained about not having been received by Elie Magus; but the spark of distrust, which was beginning to gleam in the eyes of the man of law, was extinguished by the portress telling him that Magus had only just returned from a journey, and that on the day after to-morrow, at latest, she would bring him and Fraisier together in Pons's rooms, so that the value of the collection might be ascertained.

"Deal with me frankly," said Fraisier; "it is more than probable that the interests of Monsieur Pons's heirs will be confided to my care. In that position I shall be far better able to be of use to you."

These words were uttered in so dry a tone that Dame Cibot trembled. It was obvious that this hungry limb of law would maneuver, on his part, just as she was maneuvering on hers; so she resolved to hasten the sale of the pictures. Dame Cibot was right in her conjectures. The advocate and the doctor had gone to the expense of an entirely new suit for Fraisier, in order that he might present himself in suitable attire before Madame Camusot de Marville. The time required for the making of the clothes was the only cause which retarded this interview—an interview that would decide the fate of the two friends. It was Fraisier's intention, after his visit to Madame Cibot's, to go to the tailor's and try on his coat, waistcoat, and trousers. He found those garments finished and awaiting him; went home, donned a new wig, and, at about ten o'clock in the morning, started, in a hired cabriolet, for the Rue de Hanovre, where he hoped to obtain an audience from Madame Camusot. Fraisier in a white cravat, yellow gloves, and a new wig, Fraisier scented with Portugal water, resembled those poisons which are placed in cut-glass vials and covered with white kid; they are daintily labeled; the very string that binds the stopper is natty; but for these very reasons they appear all the more dangerous. Fraisier's trenchant aspect, his pimply face, his cutaneous affection, green eyes, and the odor of evil that hung about him were as conspicuous as clouds against an azure sky. When he was in his study, as he had appeared to Dame Cibot, he was the common knife used by the assassin to perpetrate his crime; but at the door of Madame Camusot he resembled the elegant dagger that a young lady carries in her little dunkerque.

XXI.

FRAISIER IN BLOSSOM.

A GREAT change had occurred in the Rue de Hanovre. Viscount and Vis-

countess Popinot — the ex-minister and his wife — had been unwilling that the President and Madame Camusot should quit the house which they had settled on their daughter and go into lodgings. The president and his wife, therefore, installed themselves upon the second-floor, which was left vacant by the departure of the old lady—its former tenant —who wished to pass the closing years of her existence in the country. Thus Madame Camusot—who retained in her service Madeleine Vinet, the man-servant, and the cook, had gone back to the penury from which she had started — a penury that was alleviated by the fact that she inhabited, rent free, a suite of rooms that would have cost four thousand francs a year, and by her husband's salary of ten thousand francs. This *aurea mediocritas* was, in itself, by no means satisfactory to Madame de Marville, who would have had her fortune in keeping with her ambition; but this was not her only grievance; the cession of all the family property to Cecile involved the loss of the president's eligibility to the chamber of deputies. Now, Amelie wanted her husband to be a deputy — for she did not readily abandon her projects—nor did she even yet despair of securing the president's election for the arrondissement in which Marville is situated.

Accordingly, for the last two months she had been importuning Monsieur le Baron Camusot—for the new peer of France had obtained the title of baron—to advance the sum of a hundred thousand francs out of her husband's expectant patrimony, in order, as she said, that he might buy a small estate inclosed by the estate of Marville, and producing a clear rental of about two thousand francs. She and her husband would then have a home of their own in close proximity to the residence of their children, while the estate of Marville would to that extent be rounded and increased. Madame Camusot made capital with her father-in-law out of the state of denudation to which she had been reduced by her endeavors to secure the hand of Viscount Popinot for her daughter. She asked the old man whether he could bear to see the path that led to the supreme honors of the magistracy, honors which would in future be reserved for those who had a strong parliamentary position, to remain closed to his eldest son; and pointed out to him that the concession she implored would enable her husband to take up such a position, and so make himself formidable to the Ministry. "These people," she said, "give nothing, except to those who twist their neckties for them until their tongues hang out. They are an ungrateful set. What do they not owe to Camusot? Camusot, by forcing on the issue of the *ordonnances* of July, brought about the elevation of the House of Orleans—"

In reply to all this, the old man pleaded that he was involved in railway speculations beyond his means, and postponed this act of liberality—the necessity of which he admitted—until an anticipated rise in the value of his railway shares should have occurred. This quasi-promise, which the president's wife had extorted a few days previously to Fraisier's visit, had filled her with despair. It was doubtful whether the ex-proprietor of Marville would be in time for the re-election of the chamber; for it was necessary that he should have been in possession of his qualification for a year, at least, before presenting himself to the electors.

Fraisier had no difficulty in obtaining access to Madeleine Vinet. These two viperine natures recognized each other as having been hatched from the same egg.

"Mademoiselle," said Fraisier, in honeyed accents. "I should like to have a moment's audience with Madame la Presidente in regard to a matter in which she is personally interested, and which affects her fortune. Be sure you tell her that it is a question of a succession. I have not the honor of being known to Madame la Presidente, so that the mention of my name would carry no weight with it. It is not my custom to leave my office, but I know the attentions that are due to the wife of a president, and have therefore taken the trouble to come here in person; and that the more because the affair does not admit of the slightest delay."

Put in this form, and repeated and amplified by the lady's-maid, the application naturally elicited a favorable reply. Now, this was a critical moment for Fraisier's twofold ambition, and accordingly, in spite of his intrepidity as a little provincial solicitor full of self-assertion, asperity, and keenness, his sensations resembled those of the commander of an army when engaging in a battle that may decide a campaign. As Fraisier passed into the little drawing-room in which Amelie was waiting for him, he experienced what no sudorific, however potent, had hitherto been able to produce upon his refractory skin, whose pores were clogged by hideous maladies — he felt a slight perspiration upon his back and on his forehead, and mentally ejaculated:

"If my fortune be not made, my body is saved, for Poulain assured me that my health would be re-established whenever the action of the skin should be restored. Madame," he began, so soon as he caught sight of Madame Camusot, who presented herself at the audience in demi-toilet, then pausing, he bowed to the lady with all the deference whereby ministerial officers acknowledge the superior standing of those whom they accost.

"Be seated, monsieur," said Madame Camusot, who saw at a glance that Fraisier belonged to the legal world.

"Madame la Presidente, if I have taken the liberty of addressing myself to you in a matter of importance which concerns Monsieur le President, it is because I am thoroughly convinced that, occupying the high position which he does, Monsieur de Marville would very likely leave things to take their natural course, and thus incur a loss of from seven to eight hundred thousand francs, a sum which ladies, who in my humble opinion understand private affairs far better than magistrates do, will not despise—"

"You said something about a succession—" interrupted Madame Camusot.

Amelie, who was dazzled by the magnitude of the sum, and wanted to conceal her astonishment and delight, followed the example of those impatient readers who skip to the conclusion of a romance.

"Yes, madame, a succession that was lost to you—ay, utterly, irretrievably lost—but which I am able, or shall be able, to restore to you."

"Proceed, monsieur," said Madame de Marville coldly, examining Fraisier from head to foot and scrutinizing him with a sagacious eye.

"I know your eminent abilities, madame; I come from Mantes. Monsieur Lebœuf, the president of the tribunal there—the friend of Monsieur de Marville—can give him some information as to who and what I am—"

At these words, Madame Camusot drew herself up in a manner so cruelly significant that Fraisier was compelled to insert a hurried parenthesis in his discourse.

"—A lady so distinguished as yourself, madame, will at once understand why I begin by talking about myself. That is the shortest way of coming to the succession."

To this subtle remark Madame Camusot replied only by a gesture. Encouraged by this gesture to tell his story, Fraisier resumed:

"I was formerly a solicitor at Mantes, madame. My practice was, naturally, all that I had to depend upon, for I bought the practice of Monsieur Levroux, with whom you were doubtless acquainted—"

Madame Camusot bowed.

"—With the money which I borrowed, and ten thousand francs of my own, I quitted Desroches—one of the ablest solicitors in Paris—whose chief clerk I had been for six years. I had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of the procurator-royal of Mantes, Monsieur—"

"Olivier Vinet—"

"—Son of the procurator-general; yes, madame. He was paying his addresses to a little lady—"

"*He!*"

"—Madame Vatinelle—"

"Ah, Madame Vatinelle—she was very pretty and very—in my time—"

"—She had a penchant for your humble servant: *inde iræ*," pursued Fraisier. "I was energetic, I wanted to reimburse my friends and to get married; I wanted business; I hunted it up; and I very soon

managed to brew more business for myself than all the other ministerial officers at Mantes put together. Bah! the result was that all the solicitors and notaries—ay, and even the bailiffs—of Mantes, entered into a league against me. You are well aware, madame, that in our execrable calling, when a man's ruin is desired, 'tis easily accomplished. I was caught acting for both parties in a certain case. It *is* just a trifle irregular, I admit; but at Paris the thing is done in certain cases; for here solicitors play into each other's hands. They don't at Mantes. Monsieru Bouyonnet—to whom I had already done that little favor—was imped by his *confrères* and spurred on by the procurator-royal to betray me—you see that I don't attempt to hide anything from you. In fact it was a general *tolle;* I was a rogue; I was painted blacker than Marat. I was compelled to sell my practice, and I lost my all. I am now in Paris, where I have tried to get together a business connection; but my health is so bad that I can scarcely reckon on two hours' ease out of the twenty-four. I have but one ambition *now,* and it is of the humblest character. You, madame, will perhaps some day be the wife of the keeper of the seals, or of a chief president; as for me, poor sorry creature that I am, my only desire is to have some post in which I can tranquilly pass the days that yet remain to me—some *cul-de-sac,* some quiet berth in which one vegetates. I should like to be a *juge de paix* at Paris.

"'Tis a very simple matter for you and Monsieur le President to obtain my nomination to that post; for you must cause the keeper of the seals enough annoyance to render him willing to oblige you. That is not all, madame," added Fraisier, with a gesture, seeing that Madame Camusot was on the point of speaking. "The doctor who attends the old man, whose fortune Monsieur le President should inherit, is a friend of mine—you perceive that we are coming to the point— Well, this doctor, whose co-operation is indispensable to us, is in a position strictly analogous to mine—plenty of talent, no opportunities! 'Tis through him that I came to know how deeply your interests are suffering: for even while I address you, it is probable that all is at an end—that the will which disinherits Monsieur le President is made. Now, this doctor wants to be appointed chief physician to some hospital or to some public schools; in short, you will understand, he longs for a position in Paris precisely and analogous to that which I covet. I trust that you will pardon me for having touched upon these two delicate topics; but in this business there must not be any—even the slightest—ambiguity. This doctor, moreover, is a person who is held in high esteem, a skillful man—a man who saved the life of Monsieur Pillerault, the great-uncle of your son-in-law, Monsieur le Vicomte Popinot. Now if you are so good as to promise me these two places—that of *juge de paix* for myself, and the medical sinecure for my friend—I undertake to secure you this succession almost intact—I say *almost* intact, because it will be subject to the charges which must be created in favor of the legatee and sundry other persons whose concurrence is absolutely necessary. *You* will not be called upon to fulfill *your* promises until *I* shall have fulfilled *mine.*"

Here Madame Camusot, who had just folded her arms, after the fashion of a person who is forced to listen to a lecture, unfolded them, looked at Fraisier, and observed:

"Monsieur, you display a meritorious perspicuity in all that relates to yourself; but as regards me and my affairs I must say, your obscurity is quite—"

"Madame," replied Fraisier, "two words will suffice to explain everything. Monsieur le President is the sole and single heir, in the third degree, of Monsieur Pons. That gentleman is very ill and is on the point of making his will—if indeed he has not already made it—in favor of his friend, a German named Schmucke. The value of the succession exceeds seven hundred thousand francs. Within three days I hope to have the most accurate information as to the amount of—"

"If this be so," remarked Madame Camusot in an *aside*—she was quite astounded at the possibility of the value of the estate being so large—"if this be so, I committed a grand mistake in quarreling with him and crushing him."

"Not so, madame; for but for that rupture he would now be as merry as a lark, and would outlive you, Monsieur le President, and myself into the bargain. Providence," added he, by way of disguising the hideous idea to which he had just given vent—"Providence has its own mysterious ways; let us not attempt to fathom them! As for us professional men, we are prone to take a plain, matter-of-fact view of things. Now, madame, you will see that Monsieur de Marville, holding the high judicial position he does, would not stir, *could* not stir in this matter, things being as they are. He is at daggers drawn with his cousin; you have shut your door in Pons's face; you have banished him from society. You had, no doubt, most excellent reasons for acting as you did; but the old man falls ill, he bequeaths his goods and chattels to his only friend. A president of one of the Courts Royal of Paris cannot raise any objection to a duly executed will made under such circumstances.

"Yet, between you and me, madame, when one has an equitable right to a succession of seven or eight hundred thousand francs—it may be a million for aught I know—and one is the sole heir designated by the law, it is disagreeable in the extreme to be done out of one's own. But then, in order to avert this catastrophe, one gets mixed up in all sorts of unworthy intrigues—intrigues that are extremely knotty and full of difficulties; while at the same time it is so absolutely necessary to have dealings with the dregs of society, servants, underlings, and so forth, and to come into such close contact with them, that no Parisian solicitor or notary can prosecute such an undertaking. It requires a briefless advocate like me—an advocate of solid and sterling capacity, who is devoted to his client, and whose position is, unfortunately, such as to place him on a level with the kind of persons to whom I have alluded. My business lies wholly with the small shop-keepers, artisans, and common people of my arrondissement. Yes, madame; such are the straits to which I have been reduced by the enmity of a procurator-royal, who is at the present moment assistant procurator-royal here in Paris. He never forgave me my advantage over him. I know you, madame; I know the solidity of your patronage, and I saw, in this service to be rendered to you, the termination of my sufferings, and the triumph of my friend, Doctor Poulain—"

Fraisier stopped; but Madame Camusot, absorbed in thought, did not open her lips. It was a moment of fearful anguish to Fraisier.

Vinet, one of the orators of the center, who had been procurator-general for sixteen years, and had been mentioned over and over again as likely to be appointed to the chancellorship, was the father of Vinet, the former procurator of Mantes, who for the last twelve months had held the post of assistant procurator-royal at Paris. Now Vinet, the father, was an antagonist of the rancorous Madame Camusot—for the haughty procurator-general took no pains whatever to conceal his contempt for President Camusot. This, however, was a circumstance which Fraisier did not and could not know.

"Have you nothing to reproach yourself with beyond the fact of having acted for both parties in a certain case?" inquired Madame Camusot, looking fixedly at Fraisier.

"Madame le Presidente can have an interview with Monsieur Lebœuf: Monsieur Lebœuf took my part."

"Are you sure that Monsieur Lebœuf will give a good account of you to Monsieur de Marville and Monsieur le Comte Popinot?"

"I will answer for that; especially as Monsieur Olivier Vinet is no longer at Mantes; for between you and me the worthy Monsieur Lebœuf had a secret dread of that little magistrate. Moreover, with your permission, Madame la Presidente, I will go to Mantes and see Monsieur Lebœuf. That will not occasion

any delay, since two or three days must elapse before I can learn the exact value of the succession. It is my wish and it is my duty to conceal from Madame la Presidente all the secret springs of this affair; but is not the reward which I expect for my devotion to your interests a guarantee for my success?"

"Very well, then, get Monsieur Lebœuf to say a good word for you, and if the succession be so considerable as you represent it—and I must confess I have my doubts upon the point—I promise you the two appointments—in case you succeed, be it always understood—"

"I answer for our success, madame. Only you will be so good as to send for your notary and solicitor when I require their aid; to furnish me with a letter of attorney, enabling me to act in the name of Monsieur le President; and to direct those two gentlemen to follow my instructions and not to undertake anything on their own account."

"The responsibility rests entirely on your shoulders," said Madame Camusot, solemnly; "you must be plenipotentiary. But is Monsieur Pons very ill?" she inquired with a smile.

"Indeed, madame, he might recover, especially since he is attended by a man so conscientious as Doctor Poulain; for my friend is a perfectly innocent spy, acting under my directions in your interests, madame; he is quite capable of saving the old musician. But, by the bedside of the patient there is a portress who, to gain thirty thousand francs, would push him into his grave—I don't mean that she would actually murder him, that she would give him arsenic for instance; no, she will not be so charitable as that; she will do worse; she will morally assassinate him by causing him a thousand fits of irritability in the course of the day. In the country, surrounded by silence and tranquillity, well nursed and cared for by attentive friends, the poor old man would pull round again; but, plagued as he is by a Madame Everard, who in her youth was one of the thirty pretty oyster-girls whom Paris has rendered famous—a covetous, garrulous, coarse creature, who tries to torment him into making a will under which she would come in for a good round sum—the sufferer will inevitably be attacked by induration of the liver—it is possible that calculi are already forming in it—and the necessary result will be an operation to extract them, which the patient will not survive. The doctor—a noble fellow—is in a fearful position. He ought to get this woman dismissed—"

"But this Megæra must be a perfect monster," exclaimed Madame Camusot, assuming her melodious falsetto.

This parallelism between the terrible Madame Camusot and himself was a source of silent amusement to Fraisier; he well knew what to make of these sweet, factitious modulations of a voice that was naturally dissonant. He was irresistibly reminded of a certain president, the hero of one of Louis the Eleventh's stories—a story that in its last phrase unmistakably bears that monarch's imprimatur. The president in question was blessed with a wife cut out on the genuine Xantippe pattern; but not being gifted with the philosophic temperament of Socrates, he caused salt to be mingled with his horses' oats, and ordered that no water should be given to them. When his wife was traveling along the banks of the Seine to her country seat, the horses rushed to the water to drink and took her with them; whereupon the magistrate returned thanks to God for having so *naturally* relieved him of his better half. At the present moment Madame de Marville was offering thanks to God for having planted by Pons's side a woman who could relieve her of him so *honorably*.

"I would not care even for a million if it must cost me the slightest loss of honor. Your friend should enlighten Monsieur Pons and get this portress sent away."

"In the first place, madame, Messieurs Schmucke and Pons believe this woman to be an angel, and would dismiss my friend instead of her. In the second place, this atrocious oyster-woman is the doctor's benefactress; she it was who introduced him to Monsieur Pillerault. Poulain directs the woman to be

as gentle as possible to the patient, but his very recommendations point out to the creature the means of aggravating the malady."

"What does your friend think of *my* cousin's condition?" inquired Madame Camusot.

The precision of Fraisier's answer and the perspicacity which he displayed in penetrating the innermost thoughts of a heart that was as avaricious as Dame Cibot's, made Madame Camusot quake.

"In six weeks," said Fraisier, "the succession will fall in."

Madame Camusot looked down.

"Poor man!" said she, vainly endeavoring to assume a sympathetic air.

"Has Madame la Presidente any commands for Monsieur Lebœuf? I shall at once take train for Mantes."

"Yes; just wait where you are for a minute, I will write and ask him to dine with us to-morrow; I want to see him, and make an arrangement with him whereby the injustice from which you have suffered may be redressed."

When Madame Camusot had left the room, Fraisier, who saw himself already clothed with the dignity of *juge de paix*, was no longer like the same man; he seemed to have grown stout; he inhaled deep draughts of the atmosphere of happiness and the favoring breezes of prosperity. He imbibed from the hidden fountains of Will fresh and potent doses of that divine essence; like Remonencq, he felt that, to attain his ends, he would not shrink from committing a crime, provided only that it left behind it no evidence of its commission. In the presence of Madame Camusot he had displayed a bold front, turning conjecture into reality, and making random assertions with the single object of getting her to intrust him with the salvage of this succession, and securing her influence. Representative as he was of two intense miseries and two aspirations equally intense, he spurned with a disdainful foot his squalid dwelling in the Rue de la Perle. A fee of three thousand francs from Dame Cibot, a fee of five thousand francs from the president loomed in the distance. *There* was enough to provide him with a decent abode! And, to crown all, he would be able to discharge his debt of obligation to Dr. Poulain!

Some of those harsh and vindictive characters whom suffering or illness has rendered spiteful are capable of exhibiting with equal violence sentiments of a totally opposite description. Richelieu was as good a friend as he was a cruel foe. Even so Fraisier's gratitude to Poulain, for the aid which the doctor had afforded him, was such that he would have allowed himself to be hacked to pieces to do Poulain a good turn.

When Madame Camusot returned to the room with a letter in her hand, and (unobserved by Fraisier) had a good view of him as he sat dreaming of a life of happiness and plenty, she thought him less ugly than he had appeared to be at the first glance; and besides, was he not about to render her a service? We look upon our own instrument in a light very different from that in which we regard the instrument of our neighbor.

"Monsieur Fraisier," said the lady; "you have proved to me that you are a man of talent; I believe that you can also be candid."

Fraisier replied to this appeal with a most eloquent gesture.

"Well, then," pursued Madame Camusot, "I call upon you to give me a candid answer to this question: Will your measures in any way compromise either Monsieur de Marville or myself?"

"I should not have come to you, madame, if I should some day be compelled to reproach myself with having thrown any mud on you—were the spot upon your reputation no bigger than a pin's head—for there it would look as big as the moon. You appear to forget, madame, that before I can be made a *juge de paix* at Paris, I must first acquit myself to your satisfaction. I have received *one* lesson in the course of my life. It was far too severe to allow me to expose myself to the chance of undergoing another such castigation. Now for the last word, madame; all my proceedings, in so far as they affect you, shall be submitted to

you for your approval before they are taken."

"Very good; here is the letter for Monsieur Lebœuf. I now await information as to the value of the succession."

"That is the very kernel of the matter," said Fraisier, bowing to Madame Camusot with all the grace that was compatible with his physiognomy.

"What a merciful dispensation of Providence!" said Madame Camusot de Marville to herself. "Ah! I shall be rich after all! Camusot will be a deputy; for if we get Fraisier to canvass for us in the arrondissement of Bolbec, he will secure us a majority. What an agent!"

"What a merciful dispensation of Providence!" said Fraisier to himself as he descended the staircase; "and what an artful jade is this Madame Camusot! She is just the very woman I wanted to find! And now to business."

And away he sped to Mantes, there to win the good graces of a man whom he scarcely knew. But Fraisier was counting on Madame Vatinelle—to whom, alas, he could trace back all his misfortunes—and there is this resemblance between the sorrows of love and the protested bill of a substantial debtor; the latter bears interest, and the former inspire it.

XXII.

A CAUTION TO OLD BACHELORS.

THREE days afterward, while Schmucke was asleep—for Madame Cibot and the old musician had already begun to share the burden of nursing and sitting up with the sufferer—Dame Cibot had had what she called a bit of a tiff with poor Pons. It may be useful to point out a painful peculiarity of *hepatitis*. Persons who are attacked more or less severely with this disease of the liver, are apt to be hasty and choleric; and the liver is momentarily relieved by these gusts of passion, just as the patient, in a sudden access of fever, is conscious of being abnormally strong. When the paroxysm is over, a weakness—which the doctors term *collapsus*—sets in; and the full extent of the injury sustained by the system then becomes apparent. Thus it happens that in diseases of the liver, and especially in those which have their origin in profound mental suffering, the patient's fits of irritation are followed by exhaustion that is all the more dangerous on account of the strict diet to which he is subjected.

In these cases all the humors of the body are agitated by a kind of fever; for the fever is not in the blood nor in the brain. This morbid susceptibility of the whole system produces a feeling of depression that makes the sufferer loathsome to himself. In such a crisis every trifle causes a dangerous irritation. Now Dame Cibot, a woman of the people, without experience and without education, did not believe—spite of the admonitions of the doctor—in these tortures inflicted on the nervous system by the humors of the body. Monsieur Poulain's explanations were, in her opinion, mere doctors' crotchets. Like all ignorant persons, she was resolutely bent on making the patient eat; and she would have secretly fed him on ham, omelets, and vanilla chocolate, but for the following unqualified declaration from the lips of Dr. Poulain:

"Give Monsieur Pons but a single mouthful of food, and you will kill him as surely as if you fired a pistol at him."

The obstinacy of the lower classes in this respect is so great that the repugnance of the ailing poor to going into a hospital arises from the belief that persons are *starved* to death there. The mortality caused by the secret supplies of eatables conveyed by women to their husbands has been found so great that hospital physicians have been compelled to subject to the strictest search all those who come on visiting days to see the patients. Dame Cibot, with a view to bringing about the temporary quarrel that was necessary to the realization of her immediate profits, gave her account of her visit to the theater, not omitting her tiff with Mademoiselle Heloise, the first lady of the ballet.

"But what did you go *there* for?" inquired the patient for the third time. He found it impossible to stop Madame Cibot when she had once fairly embarked upon the stream of her eloquence.

"And then, when I had given her a bit of my mind, Mademoiselle Heloise, who saw what I was, caved in, and we became the best friends in the world. Now, you ask me what I went there for?" said Dame Cibot, repeating Pons's question.

There are certain babblers—and these are babblers of genius—who glean each interruption, objection, and remark in this fashion, and store them up as provender to feed their talk; as if it were possible that its fount should fail.

"Why, I went there to get your Monsieur Gaudissard out of a mess; he's in want of some music for a ballet, and you are *hardly* in a condition, my darling, to scribble away and do what is required of you. So I heard as how a Monsieur Garangeot would be called in to set 'The Mohicans' to music—"

"*Garangeot!*" echoed the furious Pons. "*Garangeot!* a man without a particle of talent; I wouldn't have him as a first violin! He has plenty of wit, and writes very good musical notices; but as for composing an air, I defy him to do it! And who the devil put it into your head to go to the theater?"

"What an *o'stinate* demon it is, to be sure! Look here, my pussy, don't boil over like milk porridge. Çould you, I n'ask, write music in the state you're in? Why, you can't have seen yourself in the glass? Would you like just to have a peep at the glass? Why, you're nothing but skin and bone—you're as weak as a sparrow—and yet you fancy as you can *jot down* your notes—why, you couldn't even *tot up* my bills—and, by the way, that reminds me that I must send up the third floor's bill; he owes us seventeen francs, and even seventeen francs is not to be sneezed at; for, when we've paid the druggist we sha'n't have as much as twenty francs left. Well, I was bound to tell this man, who seems a thorough good fellow—a regular Roger Bontemps as would just suit me to a T—(*he'll* never have the liver complaint, he won't)!—well, I was bound, as I was a-saying, to let him know how you was. Bless my heart and soul, you are far from well, I can tell you, and so he has just put some one in your place for a little while."

"*Put some one in my place!*" exclaimed Pons, in a terrific voice, sitting up in bed.

Sick folks in general, and especially those who are within the compass of Death's scythe, cling to their situations with a tenacity equal to the energy displayed by beginners in endeavoring to obtain them. Thus, to this poor moribund old man, his supersession seemed a kind of preliminary death.

"But," pursued he, "the doctor tells me that I am going on as well as possible! and that I shall soon return to my old life. You have killed, ruined, assassinated me!"

"Tut, tut, tut, tut! there you go," exclaimed Dame Cibot. "So, I'm your destroyer, am I? These are the pretty things you're always a-saying about me to Monsieur Schmucke when my back's turned. *I* hear what you say, I do! You're a monster of ungratitude!"

"But you don't understand that if I waste even a fortnight over my convalescence I shall be told, on returning to the theater, that I am an old fogy, a veteran; that my day has gone by, that I am a relic of the Empire, a fossil, a guy!" cried this invalid who panted for life. "Garangeot will have been making friends from the box-office up to the very cradling of the theater! He has lowered the pitch for some actress without a voice; he has licked Monsieur Gaudissaud's shoes; he has got his friends to praise everybody in the newspaper critiques; yes, and in a shop like that, Madame Cibot, people will find hair upon a billiard-ball! What devil was it that inspired you with the idea of going to the theater?"

"Why, goodness gracious me! Haven't I and Monsieur Schmucke been talking the matter over for the last week? What would you n'have, I'd like to know? You've no thought for any one but your-

self. You're that selfish that you'd kill other folks to cure yourself! Why, there's that poor Monsieur Schmucke has been a-wearing his very life out for the last month; he's worn his very feet off his legs; he can't go out anywhere now to give lessons or do duty at the theater: why, you don't notice anything that goes on! He looks after you at night as I do during the day-time. Why, if I'd gone on a-setting up with you at night, as I tried to do at first, thinking, as I did, as there was scarce anything the matter with you, I should now have to lie in bed the whole blessed day long! And who'd look after the house and the larder then, I should like to know? Pray, what on earth *would* you have? Illness is illness, and there's an end of the business!"

"It's impossible for Schmucke to have had such an idea—"

"Now I suppose you want to make out that it was *me* as took it into my head? What? D'ye think as we're made of iron? Why, if Monsieur Schmucke had carried on his business by going and giving seven or eight blessed lessons and spending the evening at the theater a-directing of that there orchestra from half-past six till half-past eleven, he'd have been carried off in ten days. Do you want the worthy man to die, him as would shed his blood for *you?* By the authors of my being, there never was such a patient as you! What have you done with your wits? Have you taken 'em to the Mont-de-Piété and pledged 'em? Every one here does their utmost for you, and yet you're discontented! Why, you must want to drive us stark, staring mad: I'm quite done up as it is without any further trouble!"

Dame Cibot's rhetoric might flow unchecked; indignation had tied poor Pons's tongue. He turned and twisted about in his bed, and feebly articulated a few ejaculations. In point of fact he was dying.

But now that the quarrel had reached this pitch, a sudden change supervened, and a tender scene ensued. The nurse threw herself upon the patient, and, placing her hands upon his head, compelled him to lie down, and drew the bedclothes over him.

"How on earth can people work themselves into such a stage? After all, my pussy, it's only your complaint. It's just as worthy Monsieur Poulain says. Come now, do be quiet. Do be pleasant, my good little fellow. You're the idol of every one as comes anywhere near you—why, the doctor himself comes to see you twice a day! What *would* he say if he found you in this state of n'excitement? You throw me quite off my hinges! It ain't right of you to do so—indeed it ain't. When one has Mother Cibot for a nurse one ought to behave decently to her—you shout and talk, and you know that it's forbidden. Talking n'irritates you. And why lose your temper? You're n'altogether in the wrong—you're always a-flustering me! Come now, let's just argue the point rationally! If Monsieur Schmucke and I—who love you n'as I love my own little bowels—thought that we was a-doing the correct thing! well, my cherub, that's all right, ain't it?"

"It's impossible that Schmucke can have told you to go to the theater without consulting *me*."

"Am I to go and wake the poor fellow who's sleeping like the just, and call him to witness?"

"No! no!" exclaimed Pons. "If my good and affectionate Schmucke came to that decision, I am, perhaps, worse than I thought I was." Here Pons cast a glance of intense melancholy at the objects of art which adorned his chamber, and added:

"Then I suppose I must bid adieu to my dear pictures, to all those things which I have come to regard as friends. Oh, can it be true? can it be true?"

At these words Dame Cibot—that atrocious actress—placed her handkerchief before her eyes. This mute response plunged the sufferer into a somber reverie. Beaten down by these two blows—the loss of his berth and the prospect of death—planted as they were in such sensitive spots—his social position and the condition of his health—he sunk into a state of exhaustion so extreme

that, lacking strength to be angry, he lay sad and still, like a consumptive man whose final pangs are over, and from whom life is ebbing placidly away.

Seeing that her victim was entirely subdued, Dame Cibot said to him: "Let me tell you, in Monsieur Schmucke's interests, as you would do well to send for the notary of the district—Monsieur Trognon, who n'is a very worthy man."

"You are always talking to me about this Trognon," said the sick man.

"Oh! well, it's all one to me—he or n'any one else—for anything that you will leave *me!*"

The portress tossed her head by way of showing her supreme contempt for riches; and silence was restored.

At this moment Schmucke, who had been asleep for more than six hours, was awakened by a sensation of hunger, and, getting out of bed, came into Pons's room and gazed at him for some moments in silence; for Madame Cibot had placed her finger on her lips and whispered: "Hush!" She then left her seat, and going close up to the German, in order that she might breathe her words into his ear, said: "Thank God! he's a-going to sleep now; he's as vicious as a red donkey!"

"What can you egspect; he is to pe excused on de score of his illness—"

"No; on the contrary, I'm extremely patient," interposed the victim, in a doleful voice which betrayed terrible exhaustion. "But, my dear Schmucke, she has positively been to the theater to get me dismissed—"

He paused for lack of strength to continue. Dame Cibot took advantage of the pause to indicate to Schmucke by means of a gesture the state of a man's head when his wits are wandering, and said:

"Don't contradict him; it would be the death of him."

"And she pretends," continued Pons, looking at the honest German, "that it was *you* who sent her there."

"Yez," replied the heroic Schmucke, "it was nezezzary. Don't speag—allow uz to safe you! It is folly to wear yourzelf out wid work when you have a treazure; ged well again, and we will zell some brig-à-brag, and we will end our lifes quiedly in zome znug corner, with this goot Montame Zipod to look after us—"

"She has bewitched you!" said Pons, in lugubrious accents; then, thinking that Madame Cibot had left the room since he had lost sight of her—she had placed herself behind the bedstead so that she might make signs to Schmucke without being seen by Pons—the patient added: "She assassinates me!"

"What?" exclaimed Dame Cibot, with flaming eyes, and arms akimbo, "*I assassinate you,* do I? So *that's* the reward I get for being as faithful to you as a poodle dog! Good God Almighty!" And bursting into tears, she sunk into an armchair—a tragical movement which gave Pons a fatal turn. "Well," said she, rising from the chair, and glaring at the two friends with the eye of an enraged woman—eyes that seem to emit at once pistol-shots and poison—"well, I'm sick and tired of slaving myself to death here without giving satisfaction. You shall hire a nurse!" (At these words the two friends looked at each other in dismay.) "Oh, yes, it's all mighty fine for you to look at each other like a couple of actors. I mean what I say. I goes and I asks Doctor Poulain to find you a nurse; and we'll settle our accounts together. You'll repay me the money as I've spent in these here rooms, and that I'd never have asked you for again—me as went to Monsieur Pillerault to borrow another five hundred francs!"

"It's his melaty," said Schmucke, rushing up to Madame Cibot, and putting his arm round her waist. "Do be batient!"

"Oh, as for you, you're an angel; I could kiss the very ground you tread upon," said she. "But Monsieur Pons *never* liked me; he n'*always* hated me. Besides, he may think as I wants to be remembered in his will."

"Hush! you are going de way to kill him," said Schmucke.

"Good-by, monsieur!" said Dame Cibot, going up to Pons and darting at him a withering glance. "For all the ill-will

I bears you, may you get well again. When you can be kind to me and can believe as what I do is for the best, I'll come back again. Till then I shall just stay at home. You *were* my child; since when have you seen children turn round upon their own mothers? No, no, Monsieur Schmucke, I won't listen to a single word. I'll bring you your dinner and wait upon *you;* but you must get a nurse for Monsieur Pons; ask Monsieur Poulain to find you one."

And she flounced out of the room, slamming the doors behind her with so much violence that the frail and precious works of art shook again.

The sufferer heard the clatter of porcelain—and to him, in his torture, the sound was what the *coup de grâce* used to be to those who were broken on the wheel.

An hour afterward Dame Cibot, instead of coming to Pons's bedside, called to Schmucke through the bedroom-door to tell him that his dinner was ready for him in the dining-room. Thither the poor German repaired with wan face and weeping eyes.

"My boor Bons is bezide himzelf," said he; "for he makes out that you are a fillain. It's his disease," added he, in order to soothe Dame Cibot, without accusing Pons.

"Oh! I've had quite enough of his disease! Hear what I have to say; he's neither father, husband, brother, nor child of mine; and he's taken a dislike to me; well, that's quite enough for *me!* As for you, n'I'd follow *you*'n to the other end of the world, look you; but when one gives one's life, one's heart, and all a body's savings and neglects a body's husband—which there's Cibot ill—and then hears one's self called a villain—why that coffee's a little too strong for my liking—"

"Goffee?"

"Yes, coffee, I say! But don't let's waste breath in idle talk; let's come to plain matters of fact. Well, then, you owes me for three months at a hundred and ninety francs a month; that makes five hundred and seventy francs; then there's the rent as I've paid twice—which here's the receipts—six hundred francs including the sou per livre and taxes; that's wellnigh twelve hundred francs; then, there's the two thousand francs, without interest you understand; in all, three thousand one hundred and ninety-two francs. And then, consider, you ought to have at least two thousand francs in hand to pay for the nurse and the doctor and medicine and the nurse's victuals. That's why I borrowed a thousand francs from Monsieur Pillerault." And with these words she produced the two twenty-pound notes that Gaudissard had given her.

Schmucke listened to this financial statement with an astonishment that can easily be conceived; for he knew as much about money matters as a cat knows about music.

"Montame Zipod, Bons is not in his zenzes. Egscuse him, gontinue to nurze him, gontinue to be our Brovidenze—I entreat you on my knees."

And the German prostrated himself before Dame Cibot and kissed the hands of this savage.

"Listen to me, my good pussy," said she, raising Schmucke from the ground, and kissing him on the forehead: "Here's Cibot laid up; he's in bed; I've just sent for Dr. Poulain to him. Under these circumstances I *must* put my affairs in trim. Besides which, when Cibot saw me go back to the lodge crying, he up and flew into such a rage that he's against letting me put my foot inside this place again. It's he as is a-asking for his money, and after all it *is his*, you know! We women have nothing to do with such matters. But paying him his money—three thousand two hundred francs—that'll keep him quiet perhaps. It's his whole fortune, poor man, his savings during twenty-six years' housekeeping, the fruits of the sweat of his brow. He *must* have his money to-morrow, it's no use shuffling about the business. You don't know Cibot: when he *is* angry he's quite capable of committing murder. Well! I may, perhaps, manage to get him to allow me to go on attending on you two. Make

your mind easy, I'll let him go on at me as much as ever he chooses; I'll suffer that martyrdom for *your* sake—for you're an angel, you are."

"No, I am only a boor man who lofes his friend, and woot gife his life to zave him."

"Yes, but how about money? My good Monsieur Schmucke, let's suppose you don't give me a farthing, still, you must scrape together three thousand francs for your n'actual wants. Goodness me, do you know what I'd do if I were in your shoes? I wouldn't make any bones about it; but I'd just take and sell seven or eight wretched pictures and stick some of those as are in your room, with their faces turned to the wall, in their places; for one picture's just as good as another, isn't it?"

"But why should I do dat?" asked Schmucke.

"Why, you see, he's that artful—of course I know it's all along of his complaint, for when he's well, he's a regular lamb—that he might take it into his head to get up and ferret about, and if it happens he *should* get as far as the salon, although to be sure he's that weak that he can't cross the threshold of his door, he'd find the number of pictures all right!"

"Dat is quite true," said Schmucke.

"But we'll tell him about the sale of the pictures when he's got quite well again. If you want to make a clean breast of the sale, you can lay the whole blame on my shoulders, on the needcessity of paying me. Come, my back is broad enough—"

"I gan not dizpose of things which do not pelong to me," replied the worthy German, with simplicity.

"Well then I shall summons you at once, you *and* Monsieur Pons."

"Why, dat will kill him—"

"Make your choice! Sell the pictures, and tell him afterward—you can show him the summons."

"Ferry vell, zummons us—that will be my egscuze—I will show him de judgment."

At seven o'clock in the evening of that very day Schmucke was called out by Madame Cibot who, in the interim, had consulted a bailiff. The German found himself confronted by Monsieur Tabareau, who demanded payment of the amount due; and when Schmucke, with fear and trembling, had made his answer to the demand, he was served with a summons calling upon himself and Pons to appear before the tribunal and listen to judgment for the amount due. The aspect of this official and of the stamped paper scribbled with hieroglyphics produced so great an effect on Schmucke that he offered no further resistance to the sale.

"Zell de bigdures," said he, with tears in his eyes.

At six o'clock next morning, Eli Magus and Remonencq were busy unhooking the pictures which they had respectively chosen. Two strictly formal receipts, for two thousand five hundred francs each, were given in the following terms: "I, the undersigned, acting on behalf of Monsieur Pons, do hereby acknowledge the receipt of the sum of two thousand five hundred francs from Monsieur Elie Magus for four pictures sold to him by me; the said sum being to be employed on behalf of Monsieur Pons. One of these pictures, which is ascribed to Durer, is the portrait of a woman; the second, which is of the Italian school, is also a portrait; the third is a Dutch landscape by Breughel; and the fourth a Florentine picture representing 'The Holy Family,' by an unknown master."

The receipt given by Remonencq was couched in the same terms, and comprised a Greuze, a Claude Lorrain, a Rubens, and a Van Dyck, disguised under the description of pictures of the French and Flemish schools.

"Dis money would make one belief that dese gewgaws are worth zomething," said Schmucke, when the five thousand francs were handed to him.

"Oh! the collection is certainly worth something; I would willingly give a hundred thousand francs for the lot," said Remonencq.

The Auvergnat was asked to replace

the eight pictures by an equal number of pictures of similar size. This little service he performed by making a selection from among the inferior pictures, which Pons had placed in Schmucke's room, and fixing them in the empty frames. When once Elie Magus had the four masterpieces safely in his possession, he induced Madame Cibot to accompany him to his house, under the pretext that they had to square accounts. But as soon as she was there, he began to plead poverty; he found flaws in the pictures, said that it would be necessary to put new backs to them, and concluded by offering her a commission of thirty thousand francs only. This he prevailed on her to accept by flourishing before her eyes those dazzling bits of paper on which the bank has engraved the magic words *Mille Francs!* Magus decreed that Remonencq should give a like sum to Dame Cibot—which sum he lent to Remonencq on the security of a deposit of his four pictures. These four pictures of Remonencq's seemed to Magus so magnificent that he could not make up his mind to part with them; so the next day he went to the broker, and paid him six thousand francs by way of premium; whereupon Remonencq gave him a sale note making the four pictures over to him.

Madame Cibot, who was now worth sixty-eight thousand francs, once more swore her two co-conspirators to the profoundest secrecy. She begged the Jew to tell her how so to invest her money that no one should know that she possessed it.

"Buy shares in the Orleans railway. They are now thirty francs below par; you will double your capital within three years, and your money will be in the form of a few scraps of paper, which you can keep in a portfolio."

"Stay here, Monsieur Magus, while I go to the agent of Monsieur Pons's family; he wants to know what sum you would give for all the rattle-traps up yonder; I will go and bring him to you."

"Ah! if she were only a widow!" said Remonencq to Magus. "She would exactly suit me, for she is rich now—"

"Especially if she puts her money into Orleans railway stock; it will be doubled in two years' time. I have invested my little savings in it; 'tis my daughter's portion," said the Jew. "Come, let's take a turn upon the boulevard, while we are waiting for the advocate—"

"If God would but take Cibot, who is already very unwell," said Remonencq, "I should have a glorious wife to keep my shop for me, and might go in for business on a large scale."

XXIII.

BEAUTIES OF AN ANNUITY.

"GOOD-DAY, dear Monsieur Fraisier," said Dame Cibot, in a wheedling voice, as she entered her counsel's study. "Well, and what is this as your portress tells me — that you are going to leave this place?"

"Yes, my dear Madame Cibot, I have taken the first-floor rooms in the house occupied by Dr. Poulain. They are the rooms directly above his. I want to borrow from two to three thousand francs, in order that I may furnish the suite properly; for it is really very handsome; the landlord has redecorated it throughout. As I told you, I am now intrusted with the interests of the President de Marville, as well as with yours. I am on the point of giving up the business of a general agent, and am about to be placed upon the roll of advocates; so I must be well housed. The advocates of Paris won't allow any one to be enrolled unless he has decently furnished apartments, a library, and so forth. I am a doctor of laws, I have completed my term of probation, and have already secured some influential patrons. Well, and how do we stand now?"

"Will you accept my little hoard? It is in the savings bank," said Dame Cibot. "I haven't much—only three thousand francs—the fruit of twenty-five years' pinching and scraping—you could give me a bill of exchange, as Remonencq puts

it; for as for me, I'm quite ignorant, I know naught but what I'm told."

"No; the statutes of the order of advocates forbid a member of the order to put his name to a bill of exchange: I will give you a receipt bearing interest at five per cent, and you can return it to me if I succeed in getting you an annuity of twelve hundred francs out of old Pons's estate."

Dame Cibot, caught in the trap, held her tongue.

"Silence gives consent," pursued Fraisier. "Bring me the money to-morrow."

"Oh! I shall be only too glad to pay you your fees in advance; it's a way of making sure of my n'annuity," said Dame Cibot.

"Where are we now?" said Fraisier, nodding his head affirmatively. "I saw Poulain yesterday evening; it would seem that you are leading your patient along at a very pretty pace: One more onslaught like that of yesterday, and stones will begin to form in the gall bladder. Now, do be gentle with him, dear Madame Cibot; it doesn't do to lay up a stock of remorse. It shortens life."

"Don't talk to me n'about your remorse! I suppose you're going to cram your guillotine down my throat again? Monsieur Pons is an *o'stinate* old fellow! You don't know him! It's he as makes *me cut up rough*. There's no man living more malicious than he is. His relations were quite right; he's sullen, revengeful, and *o'stinate!* Monsieur Magus is at the house, as I told you, and is a-waiting for you."

"Good! I shall be there as soon as you are. The amount of your annuity depends upon the value of this collection. If it turns out to be worth eight hundred thousand francs, your annuity will be fifteen hundred francs—why, it's a fortune!"

"Well, I'll go and tell them to value the things honestly."

An hour later, while Pons (under the influence of a sedative draught ordered by the doctor, and administered by Schmucke, but doubled in quantity by Dame Cibot without Schmucke's knowledge) was buried in a profound slumber, those three gallows-birds—Fraisier, Remonencq, and Magus—were engaged in examining, piece by piece, the seventeen hundred objects of which the old musician's collection was compossd. Schmucke had gone to bed; so these three ravens, on the scent of their carrion, were masters of the situation.

"Don't make a noise," exclaimed Dame Cibot, whenever Magus grew enthusiastic and entered into a discussion with Remonencq while enlightening the latter as to the value of some beautiful work of art.

The sight of these four different *cupidities*, appraising their succession, during the slumbers of him whose death was the object of their greedy expectations, was enough to rend the heart. The valuation of the property contained in the salon occupied three hours.

"Every object here is worth, on an average, a thousand francs," said the greasy old Jew.

"Why, that makes seventeen hundred thousand francs!" cried the astounded Fraisier.

"Not to me," pursued Magus, whose eyes grew suddenly cold and steel-like. "I would not give more than eight hundred thousand francs; since it is impossible to say how long one might have to keep the things on hand. There are some masterpieces here which it would take ten years to get rid of; so that the cost price is doubled, at compound interest; but I would give eight hundred thousand francs ready money."

"There are some enamels, and some gold and silver snuff-boxes, and some miniatures and stained glass, besides," remarked Remonencq.

"Can we look at them?" asked Fraisier.

"I'll just step in and see if he's fast asleep," replied Dame Cibot; and, at a sign from her, the three birds of prey entered the bedroom.

"The masterpieces are *there*," said Magus, pointing to the salon, while every hair in his white beard quivered, "but *here* are the riches! And what riches they are, too! Monarchs have nothing finer among their treasures."

At sight of the snuff-boxes the eyes of Remonencq kindled and shone like a pair of carbuncles; while Fraisier, cool and calm as a serpent erect upon its tail, thrust forward his flat head, and assumed the attitude in which painters are wont to depict Mephistopheles. These three contrasted money-grubbers, each of whom thirsted for gold as devils thirst for the dews of Paradise, cast an unconcerted but simultaneous glance at the owner of all this wealth; for Pons had made a movement in his sleep, as of one troubled with the nightmare.

Suddenly, under the magnetic influence of these three diabolic rays, the patient opened his eyes, and began to utter piercing shrieks.

"Thieves! Thieves! Look; there they are," shouted he. "Police! Murder!"

It was clear that his dream had not been cut short, though he was wide awake; for he had started up in bed, with eyes dilated, blank and motionless, and could not stir.

Elie Magus and Remonencq made for the door, but having reached it they were nailed to the spot by the words:

"Magus here!—I am betrayed."

The sick man had been awakened by his instinct for the preservation of his treasure—an instinct which is quite as strong as that of self-preservation.

"Madame Cibot, who is that gentleman?" he exclaimed, shuddering at the very sight of Fraisier, who did not attempt to move.

"My stars, how could I shut the door in his face?" cried the dame, winking at Fraisier, and making a sign to him. "The gentleman came here only a minute since, as the representative of your family—"

Fraisier rewarded Dame Cibot with a gesture of admiration.

"Yes, monsieur, I came here on behalf of Madame de Marville, her husband and her daughter, to express to you their regret; by the merest chance they have been informed of your illness, and they would like to nurse you themselves. They want you to go to Marville for the benefit of your health; Madame la Vicomtesse Popinot—the little Cecile of whom you are so fond—will act as your nurse there; she took your part, and has removed the misapprehension under which her mother was laboring."

"And so my heirs have sent you here, have they, with the most skillful connoisseur, the keenest expert, in all Paris, for your guide?" exclaimed the indignant Pons. "Hah! the jest is excellent!" pursued he, laughing like a madman. "You have come to appraise my pictures, my curiosities, my snuff-boxes, my miniatures! Appraise away! You have a man with you who not only knows all about everything of the kind, but can purchase too, for he is a millionaire ten times over. My dear relations will not have long to wait for my succession," added he with profound irony; "they have given me the finishing stroke. Ah, Madame Cibot, you call yourself my mother, and you introduce the dealers, my rival and the Camusots into my apartments while I am asleep—away with you, one and all!"

And so saying, the poor man, over-stimulated by the twofold influence of anger and of fear, got out of bed, emaciated as he was.

"Lean on my arm, monsieur," said Dame Cibot, rushing up to Pons, in order to save him from falling; "pray calm yourself; the gentlemen are gone."

"I will have a look at the salon," said the dying man.

Dame Cibot motioned to the three ravens to take flight; then seizing hold of Pons, she lifted him in her arms, as if he had been a feather, and totally disregarding his cries, put him into bed again; then, seeing that the unhappy collector was quite exhausted, she went and closed the door of the apartments. Pons's three tormentors were still upon the landing; and when Dame Cibot saw them, and overheard Fraisier saying to Magus: "Write me a letter, signed by both of you, undertaking to give nine hundred thousand francs down for Monsieur Pons's collection, and we will take care that you secure a goodly profit," she told them to await her return. Thereupon, Fraisier

whispered a word—only a word—which no one caught, into the ear of the portress, and went down, with the two dealers, to the lodge.

"Are they gone, Madame Cibot?" said the unhappy Pons, when the portress went back to him.

"Gone?—who?" she inquired.

"Those men."

"What men? So you've been seeing men now, have you?" quoth the dame. "You've just had a violent attack of fever, and would have thrown yourself out of the window if it hadn't been for me; and now you keep on talking to me about some men. Are you always going to be like that?"

"What! do you mean to say that there wasn't a person *there* just now—a gentleman who said he had been sent here by my family?"

"Are you going to talk me down again?" said she. "My word, do you know where you ought to be put? In Charenton!—you see men—"

"Yes, Elie Magus, Remonencq—"

"Oh! as for Remonencq—you *may* n'have seen *him;* for he came up to tell me as my poor Cibot is so ill that I shall have to leave you to yourself to get well again, as best you can. My Cibot before everybody, look you! When my man is ill, *I* know nothing about n'any one else. Do try to keep quiet, and go to sleep for a couple of hours, for I've told 'em to send for Doctor Poulain, and I'll come back with him. Come now, do drink your draught and be prudent."

"Do you mean to tell me there was no one in my room standing there—when I woke just now?"

"Not a soul!" replied she, "you must have caught the reflection of Monsieur Remonencq in your mirrors."

"You are right, Madame Cibot," said the sick man, becoming as mild as a lamb.

"Well! *now* you are rational—adieu, my cherub, keep quiet, I'll be with you again in an instant."

When Pons heard the sound of the shutting of the outer door, he summoned up all his remaining strength to rise from his bed; for, said he to himself: "They are deceiving me. I am being plundered. Schmucke is a mere child; he would allow them to take him and tie him in a bag!"

And the sick man, fired with a desire to clear up the fearful scene, which seemed to him too vivid to be a mere vision, managed to crawl to the door of his room. Opening the door with great difficulty, he found himself in the salon. There the sight of his beloved pictures, his statues, his Florentine bronzes and his porcelains revivified him. Robed in a dressing-gown, the collector (whose legs were bare while his head was burning) continued to make the tour of the two alleys formed by the row of credences and bureaus which divided the salon into two equal parts. At the first all-embracing glance of the owner's eye, the objects in the museum were counted and the collection seemed intact. Pons was just upon the very point of going back to bed, when his eye suddenly fell upon a portrait by Greuze, in a place that was formerly occupied by Sebastian del Piombo's "Knight of Malta."

Swift as the forked lightning cleaves the stormy sky, suspicion flashed across his mind. He looked to the places appropriated to his eight principal pictures, and found that those pictures had all disappeared to make room for others. A black veil suddenly spread itself over the poor man's eyes; he was seized with a fainting fit, and fell upon the floor. So deep was the swoon, that Pons lay for two whole hours upon the spot where he had fallen, and was found there by Schmucke, when he awoke and left his bedroom, to pay a visit to his sick friend. It cost Schmucke a world of trouble to raise the moribund musician and get him into bed again; but when the words that he addressed to that half-inanimate figure received no answer, save a few vague stutterings and a vacant stare, the poor German, instead of losing his self-possession, showed himself a hero of friendship.

Under the influence of despair, this child-man was inspired with one of those ideas which occur to loving women and to mothers. He warmed some finger-

napkins—for he managed to find some finger-napkins!—folded some of them round Pons's hands, applied others to the pit of his stomach, then, taking the cold damp forehead between his hands he invoked life with a potency of volition worthy of Apollonius of Tyana. He kissed the eyes of his friend just as the Marys of the great Italian sculptors kiss the Saviour, in those bass-reliefs which are called *piéta*. These divine efforts, this transfusion of one life into another, this labor, as of maternal love and womanly passion, were crowned with complete success; at the end of half an hour, Pons had been warmed into the likeness of a living man once more; the light of life returned to his eyes; and the organs of the body, stimulated by external heat, resumed their functions.

Schmucke then gave Pons a mixture of barley-water and wine, and thereupon the spirit of life infused itself into the body and understanding once more beamed upon the brow that had been insensible as stone. Pons was now conscious of the sacred self-devotion and energetic friendship to which he owed his resurrection.

"But for you I was a dead man!" said he, as the tears of the worthy German—who was crying and laughing at one and the same time—fell gently on his face.

When poor Schmucke, whose strength was now quite exhausted, heard these words—words which he had waited for in all the delirium of hope, which is, to the full, as potent as the delirium of despair—he collapsed like a rent balloon.

It was now his turn to fall, and sinking into an armchair, he joined his hands together, and offered thanks to God in fervent prayer. In his opinion a miracle had been wrought. He did not believe in the efficacy of his *acted* prayer; but he did believe in the power of the God whom he had invoked. The miracle, however, was, after all, a natural phenomenon, often verified by doctors. A patient surrounded by a circle of loving friends, and nursed by those who are concerned to save his life, will recover; while another, who, in all other respects, is similarly situated, but is nursed by hirelings, will succumb. Physicians will not admit that this difference is the result of spontaneous magnetism; they attribute the beneficial effects to intelligent nursing and faithful obedience to their injunctions; but many a mother knows full well the virtue of these ardent projections of one abiding and persistent wish.

"My good Schmucke—"

"Don't talk; I can understand you wid my heart; reboze yourzelf, reboze yourzelf," said the musician, smiling.

"Poor friend! Noble being! Child of God—living in God! Sole creature that has ever loved me!" said Pons, in broken sentences, and in tones to which his voice had never been attuned before.

The soul, preparing to take flight, poured itself forth in these words—words that caused Schmucke almost as much delight as love itself has it in its power to confer.

"Liff! liff!" he cried. "And I will begome a lion! I will work for bod of uz."

"Listen to me, my good, faithful, and admirable friend; let me speak: time presses, for I am a doomed man; I shall not survive these reiterated crises."

Schmucke wept like a child.

"Listen to me now," said Pons; "you will have time for weeping afterward. As a Christian it is your duty to submit. Now, I have been robbed, and Cibot is the robber. Before I leave you, I am bound to enlighten you on worldly matters of which you know nothing. Eight pictures, of considerable value, have been taken."

"Forgiff me; it was I dat zold dem."

"*You!*"

"Yez, *I*," said the poor German. "We were zummoned."

"Summoned? By whom?"

"Wait a moment!"

Hereupon Schmucke went in search of the stamped document left by the bailiff; and returned with it in his hand.

Pons read the jargon attentively, allowed the paper to slip from his hand, and was silent. This keen observer of the material products of human skill had hitherto neglected the moral aspect of

things; now, at length, he counted every thread in the web which Dame Cibot had woven. The *verve* of the artist, the intelligence of the pupil of the Academy of Rome, all his youthful energy returned to him for a few moments.

"My good Schmucke, obey me as a soldier obeys his officer. Listen to me! Go down to the lodge and tell this dreadful woman that I should like to see the envoy of my cousin the president again; and that if he doesn't return, my intention is to bequeath my collection to the museum; tell her that I am on the point of making my will."

Schmucke performed the commission; but no sooner had he opened his lips than Dame Cibot began to smile.

"Our dear patient had an attack of raging fever, my dear Monsieur Schmucke, and took it n'into his head as there was some folks in his room. 'Pon my word as an honest woman no one has been here n'on behalf of our dear sufferer's relations."

With this answer Schmucke returned to Pons, and repeated it to him word for word.

"She is more clever, more cunning, more astute and Machiavellian than I imagined," said Pons with a smile. "She lies even in her lodge! Just fancy; she brought hither, this very morning, a Jew named Elie Magus, Remonencq, and a third person whom I do not know, but who is more hideous than both the others put together. She counted on my being asleep, to appraise the value of my succession; it so happened that I awoke and saw the trio poising my snuff-boxes in their hands. In short, the stranger said he had been sent here by the Camusots; I entered into conversation with him. That infamous Cibot maintained that I was dreaming. My good Schmucke, I was *not* dreaming! I heard the man distinctly, he spoke to me; the two dealers took fright and made for the door. Now I expected Dame Cibot would contradict herself; but my attempt to make her do so has failed. I will lay another trap into which the wicked woman is sure to fall. You, my poor friend, take this Cibot to be an angel; whereas she is a woman who, out of pure greed, has been slowly murdering me during the last month. I was loath to believe in the existence of so much wickedness in a woman who had served us faithfully for several years. That unwillingness has been my ruin. How much did you get for the pictures?"

"Five thousand francs!"

"Good God! they were worth twenty times as much!" cried Pons. "They were the very flower of my collection. I have no time to bring an action; besides, I should have to put you forward as the dupe of these scoundrels. A lawsuit would be the death of you! You don't know what a court of justice is! 'tis the common sewer of every infamy! Hearts such as yours sicken and succumb at the sight of so many horrors. And besides, you will be rich enough as matters stand. Those pictures cost me four thousand francs, and I have had them six-and-thirty years. But we have been robbed in the most skillful fashion possible. I am on the brink of the grave; my only care is for you—for you the best of creatures. Now, I will not have you plundered. I say *you*, because all that I have is yours. Therefore I tell you that you ought to trust no one; and you have never distrusted any one in the whole course of your life. You are, I know, under God's protection; but He may forget you for a moment, and then you will be pillaged like a merchantman by a pirate. Dame Cibot is a monster; she is killing me! and you regard her as an incarnate angel. Now, I want you to see her in her true colors; so go and beg her to mention the name of a notary who will receive my will, and I'll show her to you with her hands in the money-bag."

Schmucke listened to Pons as if Pons had been relating the Apocalypse. If Pons's theory were correct, and there really existed a being so depraved as Madame Cibot must then needs be, her existence was tantamount, in Schmucke's eyes, to a total negation of Providence.

"My boor friend Bons is so ill dat he wants to mague his will; go and fetch a

notary," said the German to Madame Cibot, as soon as he reached the porter's lodge.

These words were uttered in the presence of several persons, for Cibot's condition was wellnigh desperate; Remonencq, Remonencq's sister, two portresses who had hurried to the scene from neighboring houses, three of the servants of the various lodgers in the houses and the occupant of the first floor of the street façade were standing in the gate-way.

"Ah! You may just go and fetch a notary yourself and get your will made by any one you like," said Dame Cibot, with tears in her eyes. "I sha'n't budge from my poor Cibot's bedside when he's a-dying. I'd give all the Ponses as is in the world to save Cibot—a man as never caused me, no, not two ounces of trouble during thirty years that we've lived together man and wife!"

And she retired into the lodge, leaving Schmucke quite dumfounded.

"Monsieur," said the first-floor lodger to Schmucke, "is Monsieur Pons so very ill, then?"

The name of this lodger was Jolivard; he was a registry-clerk in the offices of the Palace of Justice.

"He was almost dying a few minutes ago," replied Schmucke, in deep distress.

"Monsieur Trognon, the notary, lives close by, in the Rue Saint Louis. He is the notary of the Quarter," observed M. Jolivard.

"Would you like me to go and fetch him?" said Remonencq to Schmucke.

"I should be ferry clad if you woot," replied Schmucke; "for if Montame Zipod gannot murze my friend, I should not like to leaf him in the stade in which he is."

"Madame Cibot told us that he was going mad," pursued Jolivard.

"*Bons, mad?*" exclaimed Schmucke, terror-stricken. "He never was more zensible in his iife; and it iz just dat which magues me uneazy about his health."

So keen was the interest which all the members of the little group naturally took in this conversation, that it remained engraved upon their memories. Schmucke did not know Fraisier, and therefore paid no attention to his Satanic head and glistening eyes. Fraisier it was, who, by whispering two words in Madame Cibot's ear, had prompted the wonderful scene that she had acted—a scene the conception of which was, perhaps, beyond the range of her unaided abilities, but which she had played with all the superiority of a master in the art. To make Pons pass for a lunatic was one of the corner-stones of the edifice built by the *homme de loi*. That morning's incident had been of immense service to Fraisier; and, but for him, it is possible that Dame Cibot might, in her confusion, have betrayed herself when the innocent Schmucke came to lay a snare for her by begging her to recall the family emissary. Remonencq, meanwhile, who saw Dr. Poulain approaching, was only too glad of an excuse for getting away; why, we will proceed to explain.

XXIV.

THE TRICKS OF A TESTATOR.

Remonencq had, for the last ten days, taken upon himself to play the part of Providence—an assumption which is peculiarly distasteful to Dame Justice, who claims a monopoly of that rôle. But Remonencq's desire was, at any cost, to rid himself of the only obstacle that stood between him and happiness; and for him, happiness consisted in marrying the attractive portress, and tripling his capital. Now the sight of the little tailor swallowing his barley-water had suggested to Remonencq the idea of converting the indisposition of his rival into a mortal malady. His trade as an old-iron dealer supplied him with the means.

One morning as, with his back leaning against the jamb of his shop-door, he was smoking his pipe, and dreaming of that splendid shop on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, wherein Madame Cibot was to queen it in gorgeous attire, Remonencq's eyes fell upon a copper rundle very much oxidized. The idea of economically cleans-

ing this rundle in Cibot's barley-water suddenly flashed across his mind; so having tied a small piece of pack-thread to this bit of copper—(which was about as large as a crown-piece)—he, every day, while Dame Cibot was engaged in attending to her *two gentlemen*, went to the lodge to inquire how his friend the tailor was getting on; and during this visit, which lasted several minutes, gave the copper rundle a bath; and when he went away, drew it out of the barley-water by means of the pack-thread. This slight admixture of oxidized copper (commonly called verdigris) secretly introduced a deleterious element into the health-conferring barley-water. The proportions of the dose were homeopathic it is true; but its ravages were incalculable. The results of this felonious homeopathy were these: upon the third day poor Cibot's hair began to fall off, his teeth began to tremble in their sockets, and the whole economy of his system was deranged by these imperceptible doses of poison.

Doctor Poulain noticed the effects of this decoction, and racked his brains in the endeavor to detect their cause; for he was sufficiently skillful to recognize the fact that some destructive agent was at work. Clandestinely removing the remainder of the barley-water, he analyzed it himself; but he found no foreign substance in it, for as chance would have it, Remonencq, scared by the results of his handiwork, had refrained on that particular day from introducing the fatal rundle into the barley-water. Dr. Poulain satisfied the demands of his own conscience, and of science, by supposing that, in consequence of a sedentary life, passed in a damp lodge, the blood of this tailor, squatted on a table in front of that grated window, had grown thoroughly impure, partly from want of exercise, and partly (and principally) from the inhalation of the effluvia of a fetid gutter; for the Rue de Normandie is one of those old and ill-paved streets into which the municipal authorities of Paris have not, as yet, introduced any pillar-fountains, and in which the refuse water of the houses that line the street is suffered to form a black and sluggish stream, and, oozing beneath the paving-stones, to create that kind of mud which is peculiar to Paris.

As for Dame Cibot, she trotted hither and thither and to and fro; while her husband, indefatigable toiler as he was, was always planted before the window, in one unvarying posture, like a fakir. Hence the knees of the tailor were anchylozed; the blood had stagnated in the bust, while the legs had become so crooked and shrunken as to be wellnigh useless.

Thus the pronounced copper color of Cibot's complexion, had, for a long time past, presented the appearance of natural disease. To Dr. Poulain the wife's excellent health and the illness of her husband constituted the most ordinary phenomenon possible.

"What can be the matter with my poor Cibot?" was the inquiry addressed by the dame to Dr. Poulain.

"My dear Madame Cibot," replied the doctor, "your husband is dying of the porter's disease: his atrophy shows an incurable vitiation of the blood."

A crime without an object—a crime inspired by no greed of gain, prompted by no motive whatever—! These reflections dispelled the suspicions which had originally presented themselves to Dr. Poulain's mind. Who could wish for Cibot's death? His wife? Why, the doctor had seen her taste her husband's barley-water when she sweetened it. A great many crimes escape society's avenging hand; principally those which resemble that of Remonencq, in being perpetrated without the appalling proofs supplied by acts of violence, such as the effusion of blood, strangling, blows and other clumsy devices. In the absence of these, and where the crime is without apparent motive, and occurs among the lower classes, impunity is all the more likely.

A crime is always brought to light by its precursors—by open hate or patent greed, known to the persons beneath whose observation our lives are passed. But situated as were the little tailor, Remonencq, and Dame Cibot, no one, save the doctor, had any interest in ferreting

out the cause of death. The ailing gatekeeper with the copper-colored skin, who had no property, and whose wife adored him, was without a foe as he was without a fortune. The motives by which the broker was actuated, the passion which influenced him were (like the fortune of Dame Cibot) buried in obscurity. The doctor indeed thoroughly understood the portress and the feelings by which she was guided; he believed her quite capable of tormenting Pons, but he knew that it was not her interest, and that she had not sufficient force of character, to commit a crime. Moreover, she swallowed a spoonful of the barley-water every time that she gave her husband his dose, during the doctor's visits. Poulain, therefore, the only person who could throw any light upon the subject, believed that the strange symptoms that had attracted his notice were due to some accidental complications, to one of those extraordinary exceptions which render medicine so perilous a calling. And, in fact, the state of health of the little tailor, cribbed, cabined, and confined as he had been, was so bad that this imperceptible addition of oxide of copper was enough to put an end to him. The gossips and neighbors, moreover, acted in such a way as to clear Remonencq from suspicion; they satisfactorily accounted for this sudden death.

"Ah," cried one, "I said long since that Monsieur Cibot was not in good health."

"He worked a deal too much, did that man; he overheated his blood," cried another.

"He wouldn't listen to what I said to him," exclaimed one of the neighbors. "I advised him to get out on Sundays, and make Monday a holiday; for two holidays a week are none too many sure*ly*."

In fact the rumor of the Quarter, which is so denunciatory, and to which the Law listens, through the ears of the police-officer—that monarch of the lower orders—gave a perfectly rational explanation of the death of the little tailor. Nevertheless, the pensive look and restless eyes of Monsieur Poulain caused Remonencq considerable embarrassment; so, when he saw the doctor drawing near, it was with the greatest alacrity that he offered to act as Schmucke's messenger to this Monsieur Trognon—whom Fraisier knew.

"I shall be back again before the will is made," whispered Fraisier to Dame Cibot. "Notwithstanding your trouble, we must keep an eye on the main chance."

The little solicitor, who whisked away with all the lightness of a shadow, met his friend the doctor.

"Well, Poulain," said he, "everything is going on well. We are safe! I will tell you *how*, this evening. Choose your post, and you shall have it! As for me, I am a *juge de paix*. Tabareau won't withhold his daughter from me now. As to you, I undertake to find a wife for you in Mademoiselle Vitel, the granddaughter of our *juge de paix*.

Leaving Poulain plunged in the stupefaction resulting from this language Fraisier bounded, like a ball, on to the boulevard. Hailing an omnibus, he found himself within ten minutes deposited by that coach of modern times at the top of the Rue de Choiseul. It was about four o'clock, and Fraisier felt certain of finding Madame de Marville alone; for the judges hardly ever leave the palace before five o'clock.

Madame de Marville received Fraisier with an amount of politeness which showed that Monsieur Lebœuf had, in accordance with the promise he had made to Madame Vatinelle, given a favorable report of the quondam solicitor of Mantes. Amelie's manner to Fraisier was almost caressing (just as the Duchesse de Montpensier's must have been to Jacques Clement)—for the little solicitor was Madame de Marville's dagger.

But when Fraisier produced the joint letter whereby Elie Magus and Remonencq agreed to take the whole of Pons's collection and to give for it a lump sum of nine hundred thousand francs in ready money, Madame de Marville directed at the little law-agent a glance eloquent of that amount—a perfect wave of avarice that rolled to the very feet of the solicitor.

"Monsieur le President has commissined me to invite you to dine with us to-morrow," said the lady; "we shall be quite a family party; your fellow-guests will be Monsieur Godeschal, the successor of my solicitor Maitre Desroches; Berthier, our notary; my daughter, and my son-in-law. After dinner we—that is to say, you, I, the notary and the solicitor—will hold the little conference which you desired, and will furnish you with the necessary powers. Those two gentlemen will follow your instructions, as you required, and will take care that the whole business is properly conducted. You will receive Monsieur de Marville's power of attorney whenever you require it—"

"I shall want it against the day of the demise."

"It shall be held in readiness."

"Madame la Presidente," said Fraisier, "if I ask for a power of attorney, if I desire that your own solicitor should not appear in this matter, 'tis not so much in my own interests as in yours that I act thus. When I devote myself to any one, I devote myself body and soul; and therefore, madame, I expect, in return, the same loyalty, the same confidence at the hands of my patrons—clients is a word I dare not use in the case of yourself and Monsieur de Marville. You might imagine that in acting as I am, my object is to keep the affair in my own hands; not so, madame; but should any reprehensible steps be taken in the matter (for where a succession is in question, one is sometimes tempted into going a little too far—especially when one is dragged on by a weight of nine hundred thousand francs)—well, in that case you could not disavow such a man as Maitre Godeschal, who is integrity personified; but you *could* throw the whole blame on to the shoulders of a paltry little law-agent."

Madame de Marville looked with an eye of admiration upon Fraisier.

"You will rise very high, or sink very low," she said to him. "Were I in your position, instead of looking out for this shelf, the office of *juge de paix*, I should like to be procurator-royal at Mantes! and go in for a great career!"

"Let me take my own course, madame! The office of *juge de paix* is a parson's nag to Monsieur Vitel—to me it will be a war-horse."

'Twas thus that Madame Camusot was induced to make to Fraisier this final confidential communication:

"You seem to me," said she, "to be so entirely devoted to our interests, that I am about to initiate you into the difficulties of our position, and into our hopes. At the time of the projected match between our daughter and a certain adventurer, who has since turned banker, the president was extremely anxious to increase the Marville estate by purchasing certain pasture-land which was then for sale. We parted with this magnificent hotel, in order, as you are aware, to secure the marriage of our daughter; but, she being an only child, it is my anxious wish to acquire what is left of these beautiful pasture-lands. They have already been sold in part; they belong to an Englishman, who, after having lived upon the spot for twenty years, is on the point of returning to England. He built the most charming cottage upon a most delightful site, between the park of Marville and the meadows, which formerly belonged to the estate; and in order to form a park, he bought up coach-houses, copses, and gardens at fabulous prices. This dwelling-house, with its appurtenances, forms a feature in the landscape, and it lies close to the walls of my daughter's park. One might buy the house and the pastures for seven hundred thousand francs; for the net rental of the meadows is but twenty thousand francs. But if Mr. Wadmann hears that *we* are the purchasers, he will be sure to want two or three hundred thousand francs more, for he stands to lose that amount if, as is usual in the provinces, the residence be thrown in—"

"Why, madame, you may, in my opinion, so fully count on the succession being yours, that I am ready to play the part of purchaser on your behalf, and I undertake to secure the estate for you, on the lowest possible terms, by private contract, just as if the transaction were

effected for a dealer in land. It is in that capacity that I shall present myself to the Englishman. I understand these matters. At Mantes they constituted my specialty. The returns of the practice had been doubled by Vatinelle, for I must tell you that it was in his name that I used to act."

"Hence your acquaintanceship with little Madame Vatinelle. That notary must be a wealthy man, by this time."

"Yes, but Madame Vatinelle is very extravagant. Well, you may dismiss all anxiety, madame; I will serve you up the Englishman, done to a turn."

"If you could bring about that result, you would have an eternal claim upon my gratitude. Good-by, dear Monsieur Fraisier, until to-morrow."

Fraisier's parting bow to Madame de Marville was not so servile as it had been on the previous occasion.

"So, to-morrow I am going to dine with the President de Marville," said Fraisier to himself. "Come, I have these folks in my clutches. Only, in order to be completely master of the situation, I ought to be counsel to this German, in the person of Tabareau, the bailiff of the *juge de paix!* This Tabareau who will not let me marry his daughter—an only daughter—will give her to me, if I am a *juge de paix.* Mademoiselle Tabareau. that tall red-haired consumptive girl, is the owner, in her mother's right, of a house in the Place Royale; *that* will qualify me to be a deputy. At her father's death, she will come in for a good six thousand francs a year, in addition. She is not handsome, 'tis true; but good God! when one passes from zero to an income of eighteen thousand francs, one must not look too closely at the plank that carries one over!"

And as he threaded his way along the boulevards to the Rue de Normandie, Fraisier abandoned himself to the current of his golden dream, to the happy prospect of being forever beyond the reach of want. He thought of bringing about a match between Mademoiselle Vitel, the daughter of the *juge de paix,* and his friend Poulain. He saw himself—leagued with his friend the doctor—as one of the monarchs of the Quarter; he would rule the elections municipal, military, and political. Ah! how short the boulevards seem when, as we trot along them, our fond ambition, mounted on fancy's steed, trots at our side!

When Schmucke returned to the bedside of his friend he told Pons that Cibot was dying, and that Remonencq had undertaken to fetch Monsieur Trognon, the notary. Pons was forcibly impressed by the mention of this name, the name which Cibot had so often hurled at him in the course of her interminable harangues as that of a notary who was the very incarnation of integrity. And now the patient (whose misgivings, since the events of the morning, had become unqualified) was struck by a brilliant idea which put the finishing touch to his scheme for deceiving Madame Cibot, and completely unmasking her to the credulous Schmucke.

"Schmucke," said he, taking the hand of the poor German, who was dazed by such an accumulation of news and events; "the house must be in a state of complete commotion; if the porter is at the point of death, we are pretty well free for some moments—that is to say, free from spies; for spied we are, you may rely upon it! Go out, take a cabriolet, drive to the theater, and tell Mademoiselle Heloise Brisetout, our *première danseuse,* that I want to see her before I die. Tell her to come here at half-past ten, when her duty is over. Go thence to your two friends Schwab and Brunner, and beg them to present themselves here at nine o'clock in the morning, to inquire after my health—just as if they were accidentally passing by—and to come up and see me—"

Now the plan formed by the old artist, who felt that he was dying, was this: He wanted to make Schmucke a rich man, by constituting him his universal legatee: and, with a view to shielding Schmucke, as far as possible, from all trouble and vexation, Pons purposed to himself to dictate his will to a notary, in the presence of witnesses, so as to exclude the supposition that he was not of sound disposing mind, and to deprive the Camusots of all pretext for contesting the final disposition

of his property. This name, Trognon, suggested to him that there was some machination on foot; he believed in the existence of some scheme for introducing into the will some formal defect, of some premeditated act of treachery on the part of Madame Cibot; so he resolved to employ this Trognon to dictate to him a holograph will, which he would seal and lock up in one of the drawers of his commode.

Pons's idea was to get Schmucke to secrete himself in one of the closets of the alcove, whence he might see Dame Cibot pouncing on the will, breaking its seal, reading and resealing it. Then, at nine o'clock on the following morning, he intended to revoke and annul the holograph will, by means of a strictly formal and indisputable testament, made in the presence of a notary. When Dame Cibot treated him as a lunatic and visionary, he read, in this her conduct, the vicarious hatred, vengeance, and greed of Madame Camusot; for, stretched on a bed of sickness, as the poor man had been for two long months, he had beguiled his tedious hours of solitude and sleeplessness by sifting, so to speak, the events of his life with the riddle of reflection.

It has been a common practice with sculptors, both ancient and modern, to place on either side of the tomb a genius holding a kindled torch. These torches, while they illumine the path of death, exhibit to the eyes of the dying the picture of their sins and errors in its proper light. 'Tis a grand idea that sculpture thus embodies; it formulates a phenomenon of human life. The death-bed has a wisdom of its own. It is a matter of common observation that, stretched on that couch, artless girls of the most tender age will display the sapience of the centenarian, develop the gift of prophecy, pass judgment on the members of their families, and read the hearts of the most accomplished hypocrites. This is the poetry of Death.

But—strange it is and well worthy of remark—there are two ways of dying. This poetic vaticination, this power of looking forward into the future, or backward into the past, is strictly confined to invalids whose bodily organs only are attacked; to those who perish through the destruction of such portions of the system as subserve the material processes of life exclusively. Thus, persons attacked by gangrene (as Louis Quatorze was), consumptive patients, persons who, like Pons, die from fever, or, like Madame de Mortsauf, from inflammation of the stomach; those who, like soldiers, are cut off by wounds in the full tide of life and health; all these enjoy, to the very last, a sublime lucidity of mind; the manner of their deaths fills us with astonishment and admiration.

Those, on the other hand, who perish from diseases that may be termed intellectual, whose maladies are seated in the brain, in that nervous apparatus which serves to convey the fuel of thought from the body to the mind; these persons die altogether; their minds and bodies founder side by side. The former (souls unencumbered by substance) bring before our very eyes the specters that we read of in the Bible; the latter are mere corpses. Pons, who had never known a woman's love—Pons, that epicure-Cato, that just man almost made perfect, now at last saw through and through the heart of Madame Camusot, and found it made of cells of gall; he came to understand the world just as he was upon the very point of quitting it.

Accordingly, like the light-hearted artist he was, finding food for mirth and mockery in all that happens, Pons had, during the last few hours, cheerfully selected the part he was to play. The last ties that bound him to existence—the chains of admiration, the potent fetters that linked the connoisseur to the masterpieces of art—had been broken on that very morning. When Pons found that Dame Cibot had robbed him, he had renounced, in a spirit of Christian resignation, the pomps and vanities of art, and bidden a long farewell to his collection and to his friendships with the creators of so many beautiful works. After the fashion of our ancestors, who reckoned death among the festivals of the Chris-

tian, Pons wished to think exclusively of his approaching end. In his love for Schmucke, he desired to extend his protection to the poor old German, even from the grave. It was this fatherly idea that led Pons to select the *première danseuse* of his theater, as an ally in his struggle with the traitors by whom he was surrounded, traitors who would assuredly show no mercy to his universal legatee.

Heloise Brisetout was endowed with one of those natures which remain true, even when placed in a false position. She belonged to the school of Jenny Cadine and of Josepha, and would have played her tributary admirers any trick; but, as a comrade, she was stanch and leal, and she stood in awe of no human power or authority whatever; for the weakness of them, one and all, experience had revealed to her, schooled as she had been by her encounters with police constables at the singularly *un*rural Bal Mabille, and during the Carnival.

"If she has thrust her protégé, Garangeot, into my place, she will, for that very reason, feel all the more bound to serve me." Such was Pons's unspoken reflection.

Amid the turmoil that reigned in the porter's lodge it was easy for Schmucke to pass out unobserved. He returned with the utmost celerity, as he did not like to leave Pons long alone. Just as Schmucke came back, Monsieur Trognon arrived to make the will; and, although Cibot was in the throes of death, his wife accompanied the notary and ushered him into the bedroom. She then retired of her own accord, leaving Schmucke, Monsieur Trognon and Pons together; but arming herself with a small hand-glass of curious workmanship, she ensconced herself near the door, which she left ajar. Thus she was so placed as to be able not only to hear what was said but to see all that occurred at this extremely critical moment.

"Monsieur," said Pons, "I am in full possession of all my faculties — unfortunately for me, for I *feel* that I am dying, and—such, doubtless, is the will of God—not one of the pangs of death is spared me! This is Monsieur Schmucke—"

The notary bowed to Schmucke.

"He is the only friend I have on earth," continued Pons, "and I wish to make him my universal legatee. Tell me in what form my will should be made, in order that my friend (who is a German and entirely ignorant of our laws) may inherit my fortune, without being exposed to any litigation."

"Everything may be litigated, monsieur," said the notary. "*That* is the drawback to all human laws. But in the matter of wills, there is one which cannot be disputed—"

"Which is that?" inquired Pons.

"A will made before a notary, in the presence of witnesses who certify that the testator is in full possession of all his faculties, the testator having neither wife nor children nor father nor brother—"

"I have none of those ties; all my affections are concentrated upon my dear friend Schmucke, here—"

Schmucke was weeping.

"Well then, since the law allows you, if you have none but remote collateral relatives, freely to dispose of your estate, subject to the dictates of morality—for you must have seen wills impugned on the score of the testator's eccentricity—a will made before a notary is indisputable. *There*, the identity of the testator cannot be denied, the notary has established his sanity, and the signature is beyond dispute. A holograph will, however, if formal and clearly expressed, is tolerably safe."

"For reasons known to myself, I decide in favor of a holograph will, to be written by me at your dictation, and placed in the custody of my friend here. Can that be done?"

"Unquestionably," said the notary. "Will you write while I dictate?"

"Schmucke," said Pons, "give me my little buhl inkstand. Dictate in an undertone, monsieur; for," added he, "we may be overheard."

"Tell me, then, in the first place, what are your intentions," said the notary.

After the lapse of ten minutes, Dame Cibot (whom Pons was watching in a mirror) saw the testament sealed after it

had been examined by the notary, while Schmucke was lighting a candle. Pons then handed the will to Schmucke, telling him to lock it up in a secret drawer in Pons's writing-desk. The testator then called for the key of the writing-desk, and tying it in the corner of his handkerchief, put the handkerchief under his pillow. Thereupon the notary, whom Pons had, out of politeness, appointed executor, and to whom he had bequeathed a valuable picture (one of those legacies which the law permits a notary to accept), left the room and found Madame Cibot in the salon.

"Well, monsieur! and has Monsieur Pons remembered me?"

"Surely, my dear, you don't expect a notary to betray the secrets confided to him," replied M. Trognon. "All that I can tell you is that a good many avaricious folks will be disappointed and a good many expectations defeated. Monsieur Pons has made an excellent will, a most sensible will, a patriotic will, that has my warmest approbation."

It is quite impossible to imagine the pitch of curiosity at which Madame Cibot, stimulated by these words, had now arrived. She went down to the lodge and spent the night at Cibot's bedside; her intention being to get Mademoiselle Remonencq to relieve her between two and three o'clock in the morning, when she herself would go upstairs and read the will.

XXV.

THE SHAM WILL.

THE visit of Mademoiselle Heloise Brisetout at half-past ten in the evening seemed to Dame Cibot to be quite in the ordinary course of events; but she was so direly afraid of the *danseuse* mentioning the thousand francs which Gaudissard had placed in her maternal hands that as she conducted the first lady of the ballet to Pons's apartments, she overwhelmed her on the way with attentions and flattery meet for a queen.

"Ah, my dear!" said Heloise, as she mounted the stairs, "I assure you that you are far more attractive on your own ground than at the theater. I do conjure you to stick to your vocation."

Heloise had driven to the Rue de Normandie under the escort of Bixion, her sweetheart, and was most magnificently dressed; for she was on her way to an evening party at the house of Mariette, one of the most illustrious *premières danseuses* of the opera. Indeed, Monsieur Chapoulot, a retired lace manufacturer of the Rue St. Denis (who occupied the first floor, and was just returning with his daughter from the Ambigu Comique) and Madame Chapoulot were alike amazed at beholding so gorgeous a toilet and so beautiful a creature upon their staircase.

"Who is she, Madame Cibot?" inquired Madame Chapoulot.

"Oh, a good-for-nothing creature! a mere jumper, that folks may see, half-naked, any evening for forty sous," replied the portress in a whisper.

"Victorine, my darling," said Madame Chapoulot to her daughter, "make room for the lady to pass."

This cry of maternal alarm did not escape the ear of Heloise. She turned round and said to the lady:

"Your daughter, madame, must surely be worse than tinder, since you are afraid she may catch fire by merely touching me."

Heloise looked pleasantly at Monsieur Chapoulot, and smiled.

"Well, I must say that she is very pretty off the stage," said that gentleman, who showed no inclination to quit the landing; but Madame Chapoulot pinched her husband hard enough to make him cry out, and pushed him into their apartments.

"Here is a second floor which has usurped the appearance of being a fourth floor," said Heloise.

"Ah, but then mademoiselle is accustomed to rising," said Dame Cibot, as she opened the door of Pons's rooms.

"Well, old fellow," said Heloise, as she entered the bedroom, and saw the poor musician lying stretched out at full

length, pale, and with shrunken features, "you're not so well as you should be then? Everybody at the theater is anxious about you; but you know what life is! However good-hearted one may be, every one has business of some sort to attend to, and one cannot find a spare hour for looking up one's friends. Gaudissard talks about coming here every day, and then, morning after morning, he is driven to his wits' end by his managerial duties. Nevertheless, we are all fond of you."

"Madame Cibot," said the sufferer, "do me the favor to leave mademoiselle and us alone together; we have to talk about theatrical matters and about my post of conductor—Schmucke will be good enough to see madame to her carriage."

At a sign from Pons, Schmucke led Madame Cibot to the door and bolted it behind her.

"Ah! the scoundrel of a German; *he* too is getting spoiled," quoth Dame Cibot to herself, when she heard the significant sound of the drawn bolts. "It's Monsieur Pons what sets him on to do these horrid things. But you shall pay me for it, my little friends," said she to herself as she descended the stairs. "Bah! if this mountebank of a dancer mentions the thousand francs, I'll tell the old boys it's nothing but an actor's joke."

And so saying, she resumed her seat near the pillow of poor Cibot, who was complaining that his stomach was on fire; for Remonencq had just been giving him a draught during his wife's absence.

"My dear child," said Pons to the *danseuse*, while Schmucke was engaged in dismissing Dame Cibot, "I trust entirely to you to choose me an honest notary, who will come here at half-past nine to-morrow morning to receive my will. I want to leave my whole fortune to my friend Schmucke. Should he be tormented by any one 'tis on this notary that I reckon to advise and to defend him. That is why I desire to have a notary of high reputation and great wealth—one who is altogether above the temptations which sometimes seduce the legal practitioner from the right path; for in this notary, my poor legatee must find a prop to lean upon. I distrust Berthier, Cardot's successor, and you who know so many people—"

"Ah, I have it!" said the *danseuse*. "The man you want is Leopold Hannequin, notary to Florine and the Comtesse de Bruel—a virtuous man who doesn't know what a *lorette* is. He's a sort of second-hand father, a worthy man who saves one from playing Old Harry with the money one gets. I call him the father of the *rats*, for he has imbued all my friends with principles of economy. To begin with, he has an income of sixty thousand francs independently of his profession, my dear fellow. Then, he is a notary of the old school. He is a notary when he walks and when he sleeps; all his children must needs be little notaries and notaresses born. In short, he's a dull, heavy, pedantic man; but—he's a man whom no earthly power can bend when he is in the exercise of his functions. He never kept a mistress; he is a fossil paterfamilias, and his wife worships him and is true to him, although she *is* a notary's wife. What can you have more? There's nothing better to be had in Paris—in the way of notaries. He is patriarchal, 'tis true; he's not at all absurd and amusing, as Cardot used to be with Malaga; but then he will never give his creditors the slip like that little thing-a-bob who lived with Antonia. I will send him here to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, so you may sleep in peace. In the first place, I hope you'll get well, and write some more pretty music for us; but, after all, life's a sad business in these days when contractors haggle and kings play for pence and ministers pilfer and rich folks go in for cheese-paring. Artists too have none of *this* left," said she, clapping her hand to her heart; "it is high time to die—good-by, old man!"

"Above and beyond all, Heloise, I beg you to maintain the strictest secrecy."

"This isn't a matter that relates to the theater! 'Tis a thing that is sacred to an artist," said she.

"Who is your present protector, child?" asked Pons.

"The mayor of your arrondissement, Monsieur Baudoyer, who is every whit as stupid as Crevel deceased; for I suppose you are aware that Crevel, one of Gaudissard's former partners, died a few days since, and hasn't left me a fraction—no, not even so much as a pot of pomatum! That's what causes me to say that the times we live in are disgusting."

"And what did he die of?"

"Of his wife—! If he had stuck to me, he would have been alive now. Good-by, my dear old fellow! I talk to you about kicking the bucket, because I can see that, in a fortnight's time, we shall have you trotting along the boulevards, and smelling out your pretty little curiosities once more; for *you're* not ill, your eyes are brighter now than I ever knew them."

And off went the *première danseuse*, fully convinced that her protégé, Garangeot, was permanently installed in the post of leader of the orchestra. Garangeot was her cousin-german.

Every door was ajar, and every family was on the alert as the *première danseuse* went downstairs. Her visit was quite an event in that house.

Like a bull-dog which never lets go a bit of meat into which he has once set his teeth, Fraisier was stationed in the lodge, cheek by jowl with Madame Cibot, when the ballet-dancer passed under the entrance gateway and called for the door to be opened. He knew that the will had been made; he had just been gauging Dame Cibot's mental condition; for Maître Trognon, the notary, had been as reticent about the will to Fraisier as he had been to Madame Cibot. It was quite natural that the man of law should observe the *danseuse* as she passed out; and he secretly resolved to turn to good account this visit *in extremis*.

"My dear Madame Cibot," said Fraisier; "this is for you the critical moment."

"Ah, yes," said she, "my poor dear Cibot! To think that he'll not live to enjoy whatever I may come in for!"

"The thing is to find out whether Monsieur Pons has left you anything; whether, in fact, your name is mentioned in the will or whether you have been forgotten," continued Fraisier. "I represent the natural heirs of the testator, and, in any case, it is only through them that you will get a single farthing; for the will is a holograph, and is, consequently, anything but indisputable. Do you happen to know where our patient has put it?"

"Yes; in a secret drawer of his writing-desk, and he's taken the key of it, and he's tied it up in the corner of his handkerchief, and he's been and stuck the handkerchief under his pillow. I saw the whole thing."

"Is the will sealed up?"

"Alas, yes."

"To obtain possession of a will surreptitiously and to suppress it is a crime; but to take a peep at it is only a delict; and in any case what does it amount to? a peccadillo which no one can swear to! Is our friend a heavy sleeper?"

"He is; but when you wanted to have a good look at his collection and value the lot, he must have been sleeping as sound as a top, and yet he awoke. Howsomever, I'll see what can be done. This morning I'll go n'up to relieve Monsieur Schmucke at four o'clock, and if you'll come you can have ten minutes to look at the will—"

"Well, that's settled, then; I will get up at four o'clock, and I'll knock gently—"

"Mademoiselle Remonencq, who'll take my place near Cibot, will know who it is, and will pull the door-string; but rap at the window so as not to wake any one."

"Agreed," said Fraisier; "you will have a light, won't you? a candle will be quite enough."

At midnight the poor old German, seated in an armchair and almost brokenhearted, was watching Pons, whose features, contracted like those of a dying man, wore an expression of exhaustion so intense that he seemed to be on the very verge of dissolution.

"I think that I have just sufficient strength to last till to-morrow evening," said the sufferer, philosophically. "My death-struggle will come, my dear Schmucke, to-morrow night, no doubt. So soon as the notary and your two friends

have left me, you will go and fetch our good Abbe Duplanty, the curate of Saint Francis. The worthy man does not know that I am ill; and I should like to receive the holy sacraments to-morrow at midday."

After a long pause Pons resumed: "God has not seen fit that my life should be what I had dreamed it might be. I should have been so fond of my wife, my children, my family—if I had had them! To be loved and cherished by a few beings, in some quiet nook—that was my sole ambition! Life is bitter to every one; for I have seen people blessed with all that I have vainly longed for, and yet not happy. Toward the close of my career, the good God bestowed upon me the unexpected consolation of meeting with such a friend as you; and indeed, my dear Schmucke, I cannot reproach myself with having misunderstood or undervalued you; I have given you my heart and all the affection that was at my command. No, Schmucke, do not weep, or I must hold my tongue; and it is so sweet to me to talk to you about ourselves. Had I attended to what you said to me, I should have lived; I should have quitted the world and my old habits of life, and should have escaped the mortal wounds I have received. Now, I wish to think of *you* exclusively—"

"You are wrong—"

"Do not gainsay me, but listen to me, dear friend. You are as simple and as candid as a child of six years old that has never left its mother's side—'tis a frame of mind that is worthy of all respect; it seems to me that God Himself should take charge of beings such as you are. But still men are so wicked that it is my duty to put you on your guard against them. You are, therefore, on the point of losing your noble trustfulness, your sacred unsuspectingness—that ornament of the pure in heart which is given only to genius, and to beings like yourself. You are shortly about to see Madame Cibot (who was watching us closely through the half-open door) come and take this pretended will. I presume that the wretch will undertake this expedition this morning when she thinks you are asleep. Now, mark well what I say, and follow my instructions to the very letter. Do you hear me?" asked the sick man.

Overwhelmed with grief and seized with a fearful palpitation of the heart, Schmucke had allowed his head to sink upon the back of his armchair, and seemed to have fainted.

"Yez," said the German, bowed down beneath the weight of his sorrow; "yez, I hear what you say. But it is az if you were two hundred yards away from me—it zeems az if I were going wid you into de grave."

He drew near to Pons, and taking his hand and clasping it between his own hands, breathed to himself a fervent prayer.

"What are you muttering there in German?"

"I was braying to God to take us to Himself togeder," replied Schmucke simply, when his prayer was ended.

With great difficulty (for he was suffering fearful pains in the liver) Pons managed to stoop low enough to imprint a kiss upon Schmucke's forehead. In that kiss Pons poured forth his whole soul in a blessing upon that being who in heart and mind resembled the Lamb that reposes at the feet of God.

"Now listen to me, my good Schmucke: dying men must be obeyed—"

"I am liztening."

"The communication between your rooms and mine is through a little door in your alcove, opening into one of the closets of my alcove."

"Yez, but de clozet is grammed with bictures."

"Go and clear the door at once, and make as little noise as possible."

"Yes," said Schmucke.

"Clear the passage at each end, both your end and mine; then leave your door ajar. When Dame Cibot comes to relieve guard at my bedside—she may very likely come an hour earlier than usual this morning—go away to bed as usual, and seem to be very tired. Try to look sleepy. As soon as she has settled herself in her armchair, go through your little door and remain on watch there; raise

the small muslin curtain of this glass door, and narrowly observe what takes place. Do you understand?"

"Yez, I know what you mean; you believe dat de wicked woman will purn de will—"

"I don't know what she will do with it, but I am sure that henceforth you won't take her for an angel. Now play me some music, delight me with one of your improvisations; 'twill give you something to do, you will get rid of your gloomy ideas, and will fill the void of this sad night with one of your poems—"

Schmucke took his seat at the piano. He was now in his element, and the musical inspiration arising from the tremor of his grief, aided by the excitement resulting from that grief, soon bore the worthy German beyond the bounds of this material world. The themes that he invented were sublime, and he adorned them with *capriccios*, executed, now with all the sweetness and Raphaelesque perfection of Chopin, now with all the fire and Dantesque majesty of Liszt, the two performers whose musical organization most closely resembles that of Paganini. When execution arrives at this degree of faultlessness the performer seems to be placed upon a level with the poet; he is to the composer what the actor is to the author—a divine translator of a divine work. But on this particular night, during which Schmucke gave Pons a foretaste of the concerts of Paradise—of that exquisite music which steals the instruments from the grasp of Saint Cecilia and strews them on the jasper floor of heaven, the old German was both Beethoven and Paganini—the creator and the interpreter both in one.

Inexhaustible as the nightingale, sublime as the heaven beneath which it sings, various and leafy as the forest which it fills with its magic melodies, Schmucke surpassed himself and plunged the old musician, who was listening to him, into the ecstasy which Raphael has depicted in that painting which is one of the sights of Bologna. But this musical poem was interrupted by a frightful ringing of bells. The house-maid of the first-floor lodgers came up to entreat Schmucke to put a stop to that witches' Sabbath. Madame, Monsieur and Mademoiselle Chapoulot were all awake and could not get to sleep again; and they begged to say that the day was quite long enough for the rehearsal of theatrical music, and that in a house situated in the Marais it was not proper to *strum* upon the piano at night. As a matter of fact, it was about three o'clock in the morning.

At half-past three the previsions of Pons—who might well have been supposed to have overheard the conference between Fraisier and Dame Cibot—were realized by the entrance of the portress. The patient directed at Schmucke a glance of intelligence which meant: "Did I not guess correctly?" and forthwith assumed the position of one who is buried in the profoundest slumber.

So firm was Dame Cibot's belief in the simplicity of Schmucke (and here by the way we may note that this artlessness is one of the greatest resources, and the cause of the success of the plots of children) that that estimable creature could not possibly suspect his good faith, when he approached her, and said, with an air in which sorrow was blended with elation:

"He has had a terriple night; he has been tevilishly egzited. I was opliged to blay in order to galm him, and de lotchers on de first-floor zent up to dell me to be guiet. It is frightful; for de life of my friend was at stake. I am zo dired from having blayed all night long dat I am dead beat dis morning."

"My poor Cibot, too, is very bad; another such day as yesterday and there will be no hopes of him. But what can one do? God's will be done!"

"You are sudge an honest greature, and have sudge a goot heart, dat if Fader Zibod dies I will dague you to liff with me," said the artful Schmucke.

When the artless and upright begin to dissemble they are truly formidable—as formidable as children whose snares are laid with all the skill which savages display.

"Well, get you to bed now, my little man," said Dame Cibot. "Your n'eyes

are that weary that they are as big as my fist. Ah! there is but one thing as could console me for the loss of Cibot, and that would be the thought that I should n'end my days with a worthy man like you. Don't you put yourself about, I'll lead that Madame Chapoulot a pretty dance. Is it for a retired milliner to give herself such airs and graces?"

Thereupon Schmucke went and took up the post of observation which he had prepared for himself. Dame Cibot had left the door ajar, and Fraisier glided in and gently closed it so soon as Schmucke had shut himself in his own room. The advocate was provided with a candle and a piece of very fine brass wire, wherewith to unseal the will. Dame Cibot experienced very little difficulty in removing the key that was tied in the handkerchief which lay beneath Pons's pillow; inasmuch as the old musician had designedly allowed the handkerchief to peep from beneath the bolster, and aided Dame Cibot's maneuvers by lying with his head over the edge of the bedstead and in a position that rendered it a very simple matter to capture the handkerchief. Having secured the key, Dame Cibot marched straight to the writing-desk, opened it as noiselessly as possible, discovered the spring of the secret drawer, and rushed into the salon, with the will in her hand. This circumstance excited Pons's curiosity to the very highest degree. As for Schmucke, he trembled from head to foot as if he had been committing some crime.

"Go back to your post," said Fraisier, as he took the will from Dame Cibot; "for if he should wake he ought to find you there."

When Fraisier (with an adroitness which showed that this was not his maiden effort of this kind) had unsealed the envelope, he read, with profound astonishment, the following singular document:

"This is my will.

"This fifteenth day of April, one thousand eight hundred and forty-five, being of sound mind, as this testament drawn up with the assistance of Monsieur Trognon, notary, will prove, I, feeling that I must shortly succumb to the illness from which I have been suffering since the commencement of the month of February last, have thought fit, inasmuch as I desire to dispose of my goods and chattels, to make my last will as follows. I have frequently been struck by the evils to which the masterpieces of the painter are exposed—evils which frequently involve the total destruction of those masterpieces. I have been seized with a feeling of pity for the beautiful pictures which are doomed to travel perpetually from clime to clime without ever finding a home in one certain spot, to which those who admire them may repair to view them. It has always been my opinion that the really immortal pages of the great masters ought to be national property, and should be continually offered to the eyes of men, just as light (which is God's masterpiece) is granted to all his children.

"Now, inasmuch as I have spent my life in choosing and gathering together sundry pictures, which are the glorious productions of the greatest masters; since these pictures are perfect, and have never been either repainted or retouched, I have dwelt with pain upon the thought, that, after having been the delight of my existence, they are doomed to be sold by auction, and to be scattered, some in England, some in Russia—dispersed hither and thither, as they were before they were brought together by me. I have therefore determined to save them from these misfortunes, them and the magnificent frames in which they are inclosed, and which are all of them the handiwork of cunning workmen.

"Actuated, therefore, by these motives, I give and bequeath to the king the pictures comprised in my collection as a contribution to the museum at the Louvre, charged—if the bequest be accepted—with the payment of an annuity of two thousand four hundred francs to my friend Monsieur Schmucke. If the king, as trustee of the museum, disclaims the legacy burdened with this charge, then the said pictures shall form

part of the bequest which I hereby make to my friend Schmucke, of all the property of which I am possessed on condition that he shall make over the 'Monkey's Head' by Goya, to my cousin, President Camusot, and the flower picture by Abraham Mignon, being a study of tulips, to Monsieur Trognon, notary, whom I hereby appoint executor of this my testament, and upon further condition, that he pays to Madame Cibot, who has been my housekeeper for ten years, an annuity of two hundred francs. Lastly, my friend Schmucke will make over the 'Descent from the Cross,' by Rubens, being the sketch of his celebrated picture at Antwerp, to my parish church for the ornamentation of one of its chapels, as a token of gratitude for the kindness of Monsieur Duplanty the curate, to whom I am beholden for the power of dying a Christian and a Catholic," etc., etc.

"'Tis absolute ruin!" exclaimed Fraisier to himself; "the ruin of all my hopes. Ah! I begin to believe all that Madame Camusot told me about the malignity of this old artist!"

"Well?" said Dame Cibot, coming in.

"Your gentleman is a monster; he has given everything to the museum, to the State. Now, one cannot bring an action against the State! The will cannot be set aside. We are robbed, ruined, plundered, murdered!"

"What has he given *me?*"

"An annuity of two hundred francs."

"That's a fine tale, indeed! Why, he's no end of a scamp!"

"Go and see if there's an end of him," said Fraisier. "I am about to replace the will of your scamp in its envelope."

XXVI.

WHEREIN DAME SAUVAGE REAPPEARS.

The moment that Madame Cibot's back was turned, Fraisier clapped the will into his pocket and supplied its place in the envelope with a sheet of blank paper. He then resealed the envelope so skillfully that he triumphantly exhibited the seal to Madame Cibot on her return and asked her whether she could detect the slightest trace of the operation. Dame Cibot took the envelope, fingered it, and feeling that it was full, heaved a profound sigh. She had fondly hoped that Fraisier would himself have burned the fatal document.

"Well, and what is to be done now, my dear Monsieur Fraisier?" she inquired.

"Oh! that is your concern! *I* am not the heir; but if I had the least claim to all that," continued he, pointing to the collection, "I know full well what *I* should do."

"That's precisely what I'm a-asking of you," said Dame Cibot, stupidly.

"There's a fire in the grate," said Fraisier, as he rose to depart.

"Well, when all's said and done, no one but you and me'll know anything about the matter!" said Dame Cibot.

"It can never be proved that there was any will in existence," replied the man of law.

"And how about you?"

"*Me?*—if Monsieur Pons dies intestate, I guarantee you a hundred thousand francs."

"Ah, yes, of course," said she; "people promise you heaps of gold, and when they've got what they want they haggle with you just as—"

She stopped short, and it was high time, for she was just on the point of mentioning Elie Magus to Fraisier.

"Well, I'm off," said Fraisier. "In your interests it won't do for me to be seen in these rooms; but we will meet below in the lodge."

When she had closed the outer door, Dame Cibot returned with the envelope in her hand, fully intending to throw it into the fire, but when she had reached the bedroom and was making for the fireplace, she felt both her arms suddenly pinioned, and found herself with Pons on one side of her and Schmucke on the other. The friends had planted themselves on either side of the door, with their backs against the partition.

"Oh!" screamed Dame Cibot, and fell upon the floor in hideous convulsions—real or feigned; the truth was never known.

This spectacle produced so strong an impression upon Pons, that he was seized with a mortal faintness; and Schmucke, leaving Dame Cibot where she lay, made haste to get Pons into bed again. The two friends trembled like men who in the execution of some painful project have overtaxed their strength. When Pons was in bed and Schmucke had partially regained his equanimity, his attention was attracted by the sound of some one sobbing; and lo, Dame Cibot, on her knees, was weeping bitterly and stretching out her hands to the two friends, was addressing entreaties to them in most expressive dumb show.

"It's only idle curiosity! dear Monsieur Pons," said she, so soon as she saw that the attention of the two friends was directed toward her; "the besetting sin of women, you know!" But I found I couldn't read your will, and I was a-going to replace it—"

"Away wid you!" said Schmucke, starting to his feet, and towering with his towering indignation, "you are ein monzder! you have tried to gill my goot Bons. He is right! you are worze dan a monzder; you are accurzed!"

When Dame Cibot perceived the horror depicted on the face of the candid German, she rose from her knees, proud as Tartuffe, darted at Schmucke a glance that made him tremble, and left the room, taking with her, concealed in the folds of her dress, a beautiful little picture by Metzu, which Elie Magus had greatly admired, terming it "a diamond." In the lodge Dame Cibot found Fraisier, who was waiting for her in the hope that she would have burned the envelope and the blank sheet of paper which he had substituted for the will. Great was his astonishment to see his client terror-stricken, and, to all appearances, entirely upset.

"What has happened?" said he.

"What has happened, dear Monsieur Fraisier?—Why, just this has happened; that under pretense of giving me sound advice, and acting as my guide, you have caused me to lose all chance of getting my n'annuity and the confidence of these gentlemen—"

And she launched forth upon one of those torrents of words in which she was unrivaled.

"Don't waste your breath in talking nonsense," said Fraisier dryly, cutting his client short. "The facts! the facts! and quickly."

"Well then, this was what happened." And she told him exactly what had occurred.

"I haven't caused you to lose anything," replied Fraisier. "These two gentlemen must have had some doubts about your honesty; else they would not have laid this trap for you; they were waiting for and watching you! You are keeping something back from me," added the man of law, casting a tiger glance at the portress.

"*Me* keep anything back from you! After all as you and me have done together!"

"But, my darling, *I* have done nothing that is reprehensible," said Fraisier, thus manifesting his intention to deny his nocturnal visit to Pons's rooms.

Dame Cibot felt as if the roots of her hair were so many red-hot wires while the rest of her body was as cold as ice.

"What?" exclaimed she, dumfounded.

"Here is the criminal process, ready to hand! You have rendered yourself liable to be prosecuted for stealing a will," replied Fraisier, coolly.

Dame Cibot met this assertion with a gesture of horror.

"Take courage," pursued Fraisier; "you have me for your counsel. My only object was to show you how easy it is, in one way or another, to expose yourself to what I told you of in our first interview. Come now, what have you done to this German, who is so unsuspecting, to lead him to secrete himself in the room without your knowledge?"

"Nothing at all. It all comes of what happened the other day when I kept on telling Monsieur Pons that he had seen double. Ever since that day these gentle-

men have changed their manner to me n'altogether; so that you are the cause of all my misfortunes; for if I had lost my hold upon Monsieur Pons, I was, at least, sure of the German, for he talked about marrying me, or of taking me to live with him, which it's all one and the same thing."

This explanation was so plausible that Fraisier was obliged to rest contented with it.

"Cheer up," he resumed; "I have promised you a fortune, and I will keep my word. Up to this moment, everything connected with this affair was problematical; *now* it is as good as bank-notes; you will have an annuity of twelve hundred francs, at least. But you must obey my orders, my dear Madame Cibot, and execute them with intelligence."

"I will, dear Monsieur Fraisier," said the portress with all the suppleness of servility. She was completely cowed.

"Well! good-by then," said Fraisier, quitting the lodge, and carrying off the dangerous will in his pocket.

He returned home in great exultation, for the will was a most formidable weapon in his hands.

"I shall now have an excellent guarantee for the good faith of Madame de Marville," thought he. "If she should take it into her head to break her promise, she would lose the succession."

At early dawn, Remonencq, having opened his shop and left it to the care of his sister, went, as he had been in the habit of doing for some days past, to see how his good friend Cibot was faring. He found the portress examining the picture by Metzu. She was asking herself how a little bit of painted wood could possibly be worth so much money.

"Ah! ah!" said Remonencq, looking over Madame Cibot's shoulder, "that's the only picture which Monsieur Magus was sorry at not having; he said that if he owned that little thing, nothing would be wanting to complete his happiness."

"What would he give for it?" asked Dame Cibot.

"Now, if you promise to marry me within a year of your widowhood," replied Remonencq, "I will undertake to get twenty thousand francs for it from Elie Magus, and, if you don't marry me, you will never be able to sell the picture for more than a thousand francs."

"And why?"

"Because you would be obliged to give a receipt as the owner of the picture, and that would involve you in a lawsuit with the heirs. If you were my wife, *I* should sell it myself to Monsieur Magus, and all that is required of a dealer is an entry in his purchase-book, and I shall enter the picture as sold to me by Monsieur Schmucke. Come now, let me put the bit of wood in my shop—if your husband should die, you might get into trouble about it, whereas no one would think it odd for me to have a picture in my place. You know me well enough to trust me; besides, if you wish it, I will give you a receipt."

Caught as she was, in this act of criminality, the avaricious portress closed with Remonencq's offer, and thus forever bound herself to him.

"You are quite right," said she, locking up the picture in her chest of drawers. "Bring me your receipt."

"Neighbor," said the broker, in an undertone, leading the portress to the step of the gateway, "I can plainly see that we shall not save the life of our poor friend Cibot; Dr. Poulain gave no hopes of him yesterday evening, and said that he would not last out the day. It's very sad, no doubt; but after all you were not in your proper place here. *Your* place is in a fine shop in the Boulevard des Capucines. Are you aware that I have made nearly a hundred thousand francs in the last ten years, and if you have an equal amount one of these days, I undertake to make a fine fortune for you—if you are my wife. You would be a lady, well waited on by my sister, who would look after the housekeeping, and—"

Here the broker was interrupted by the heartrending groans of the little tailor, who was just beginning to feel the agonies of death.

"Go along with you," said Dame Cibot; "you n'are a monster, to talk to me about

such things, while my poor husband is dying in such dreadful pain—"

"Ah, it's because I love you to distraction, and would do anything to get you."

"If you loved me, you wouldn't say anything to me just now," replied she.

And Remonencq returned to his shop, sure that Dame Cibot would be his wife.

At about ten o'clock there was a sort of tumult at the door of the house; for the sacraments were being administered to Cibot. All the friends of the little tailor, the porters and portresses of the Rue de Normandie and of the adjacent streets, encumbered the lodge, the entrance gateway, and the street front of the house. Under these circumstances the successive arrivals of M. Leopold Hannequin, accompanied by one of his brother notaries, and of Schwab and Brunner, attracted no attention. They reached Pons's apartments unobserved by Madame Cibot; for it was to the portress of the adjoining house that the notary applied for information as to which story Pons occupied, she it was who directed him to the second-floor. As to Schwab's companion, Brunner, he had already paid a visit to the Pons Museum; he therefore passed on without making any inquiries, and showed the way to his partner Schwab.

Pons now formally revoked the will which he had made on the previous evening, and appointed Schmucke his universal legatee. As soon as the ceremony was over and Pons had expressed his gratitude to Schwab and Brunner, and earnestly commended the interests of Schmucke to Monsieur Leopold Hannequin, the old musician sunk into a state of utter prostration—the result of the energy he had exerted during the night-scene with Dame Cibot, and in this the final act of the drama of social life. So intense was his exhaustion that Schmucke begged Schwab to go and inform the Abbe Duplanty; for the old German did not like to quit the bedside of his dying friend, and Pons was asking that the sacraments might be administered to him.

Dame Cibot, meanwhile, who had been excluded from the apartments of the two friends, was seated at the foot of her husband's bed, and had wholly neglected to prepare Schmucke's breakfast. But the events of the morning, and the spectacle of Pons's calm dissolution—for the old musician was facing death like a hero—had so wrung the heart of Schmucke that he felt no sensation of hunger. Toward two o'clock, however, the portress, having seen nothing of the old German, was induced by curiosity quite as much as by concern on Schmucke's account, to ask Remonencq's sister to go and see whether the old German wanted anything. Just at that very moment the Abbe Duplanty (having heard the poor musician's last confession) was administering to him the rite of extreme unction; so that the ceremony was disturbed by Mademoiselle Remonencq's repeated ringing. Now, seeing that Pons, in his dread of being robbed, had prevailed upon Schmucke to swear that he would allow no one to enter the apartments, the old German took no heed of Mademoiselle Remonencq's reiterated applications to the bell-handle; whereupon that lady went downstairs in great alarm, and told Dame Cibot that Schmucke had not opened the door to her.

This circumstance (which was sufficiently striking) did not escape the observation of Fraisier, who, ever since breakfast-time had been stationed in the porter's lodge, where he had held an unbroken conference with his friend, Dr. Poulain. Schmucke—so thought the man of law—Schmucke (to whom a death-bed was a novelty) was on the point of being subjected to all the inconveniences which surround the denizen of Paris, who is suddenly brought face to face with death—inconveniences which are greatly enhanced by the want of aid and the absence of an agent. It was at this crisis then, that the idea of being himself the mainspring of all Schmucke's movements occurred to Fraisier, who knew full well that, under such circumstances, relatives who are genuinely distressed lose their heads entirely. We will now relate how the two friends, Dr. Poulain and Fraisier, set to work to achieve the desired result.

The beadle of Saint Francis's, one Cantinet by name, who had formerly been a dealer in glass, lived in the Rue d'Orleans, in the house adjoining that in which Dr. Poulain's apartments were situated. Now, it so happened that Madame Cantinet, one of the pew-openers at Saint Francis's, had been attended by Dr. Poulain gratuitously. She consequently felt very much indebted to him, and had often imparted to him the whole story of her misfortunes. The Pair of Nut-Crackers who, on Sundays and saints' days, regularly attended the services at Saint Francis's, were on excellent terms with the beadle, the Swiss, the dispenser of holy water; in short, with all the members of that ecclesiastical militia which, in Paris, is dubbed with the title of *le bas clergé*—a class of persons to whom the faithful are in the habit of presenting small gratuities when years have ripened the acquaintanceship. Schmucke, accordingly, was as well known to Madame Cantinet as Madame Cantinet was to him.

Now, in Madame Cantinet's side there were two thorns, which enabled Fraisier to use her as a blind and passive tool. Cantinet junior was stage-struck: turning his back upon the ranks of the Church Militant and the beadlehood that was probably in store for him, he had enrolled himself among the ballet-dancers at the Cirque-Olympique and was leading a devil-may-care existence that wellnigh broke his mother's heart. Her purse too had often been emptied by his forced loans. Cantinet senior, her husband, was the slave of two vices—drunkenness and indolence — and had thereby been compelled to give up his business. But the wretch, instead of learning wisdom from misfortune had, in the exercise of his functions as beadle, found food for his favorite foibles. He never did any work, but drank so hard with the coachmen who drove the wedding-parties to the church, with the undertaker's men, and with the parson's pensioners, that his face was scarlet even at noon.

Thus Madame Cantinet, after having (as she said) brought her husband a portion amounting to twelve thousand francs, found herself doomed to an old age of penury. The story of her wrongs had been dinned into the ears of Dr. Poulain a hundred times; and it occurred to him that Madame Cantinet might be serviceable in facilitating the introduction of Madame Sauvage as cook and char-woman into the establishment of Pons and Schmucke. To introduce Madame Sauvage point-blank was out of the question, for the mistrust of the Pair of Nut-Crackers had become quite absolute; *that* was made abundantly clear to Fraisier by the refusal to open the door to Mademoiselle Remonencq. But that the pious musicians would accept, without the slightest hesitation, the services of any person recommended by the Abbe Duplanty, seemed equally clear to Fraisier and Poulain. According to their plan, Madame Cantinet was to be accompanied by Madame Sauvage; and, once introduced into the citadel, Fraisier's housekeeper would be as efficient as Fraisier himself.

When the Abbe Duplanty had reached the entrance gateway on his way out, he was delayed for a moment by the crowd of Cibot's friends who had gathered there to show the interest they felt in the oldest and most respected *concierge* of the Quarter.

Dr. Poulain bowed to the abbe, and, taking him aside, said to him:

"I am just going to pay a visit to poor Monsieur Pons; he may pull through yet, if we can persuade him to submit to an operation for the extraction of the stones which have formed in the gall-bladder. They are palpable to the touch, and give rise to an irritation which must terminate fatally, unless the cause is removed; but it is perhaps not yet too late to attempt the operation. You ought to use your influence over your penitent to induce him to undergo the operation. I will answer for his recovery, unless some unfavorable accident should supervene."

"As soon as I have taken the holy pyx back to the church, I will return," said the Abbe Duplanty; "for Monsieur Schmucke's state of mind is such that he is in need of religious consolation."

"I have just learned that he is thrown

upon his own resources," said Dr. Poulain. "The worthy German had a little altercation with Madame Cibot this morning; but since she has acted as the housekeeper of these two gentlemen for ten years, the misunderstanding will, no doubt, be merely temporary; still, in the meantime, he must not be left to his own devices, in the position which he will be called upon to face. To look after him is a work of charity. I say, Cantinet," cried the doctor, summoning the beadle, "ask your wife whether she is willing to nurse Monsieur Pons, and act as Monsieur Schmucke's housekeeper for a few days, in the place of Madame Cibot—who, by the way, even if this little quarrel had not arisen, would still have been obliged to find a substitute. Madame Cantinet is an honest woman," added the doctor, addressing the Abbe Duplanty.

"Oh, you couldn't make a better choice," replied the worthy priest; "for Madame Cantinet enjoys the confidence of the authorities as collector of the pew-rents."

A few minutes later Doctor Poulain, seated at the bedside of Pons, was watching his expiring agonies. Schmucke besought his friend to allow the operation to be performed. But he besought in vain. The only replies vouchsafed by the old musician to the supplications of the poor broken-hearted German were a shake of the head, and now and then a gesture of impatience. Finally, collecting all his strength, the dying man cast a terrible glance at Schmucke, and exclaimed: "Surely you might let me die in peace!"

This look, this language, caused poor Schmucke a pang that almost killed him; but taking Pons's hand, he gently kissed it, and retaining it between his own hands, endeavored once again to communicate his vital heat to the body of his friend. Just at that moment Dr. Poulain, hearing the bell ring, went to the door and admitted the Abbe Duplanty.

"Our poor invalid is just entering upon his death-struggle. A few hours hence he will be dead; you will, no doubt, send a priest to watch by the body to-night. But it is high time to call in Madame Cantinet and a char-woman to help Monsieur Schmucke; he is utterly incapable of giving a single thought to any subject; I tremble for his reason, and there is some valuable property here which ought to be in the custody of honest folks."

The Abbe Duplanty, good, easy, unsuspecting priest, was struck by the justice of Dr. Poulain's observations. He entertained, moreover, a very favorable opinion of the doctor of the district. Accordingly, he went to the threshold of the chamber of death, and made a sign for Schmucke to come and speak to him. Schmucke could not make up his mind to resign Pons's hand, which was contracting and clutching the hand of Schmucke, as if the dying man were tumbling over a precipice, and were ready to catch at anything that would arrest his fall. But the dying, as every one is aware, are subject to an hallucination which impels them—like persons trying to rescue their most precious property from the flames of a conflagration—to fasten on everything that comes in their way. Thus it came to pass that Pons released the hand of Schmucke, and seizing the bedclothes, gathered them about his body with a hurried movement that was instinct with avarice.

"What will you do when you are left alone with your dead friend?" asked the worthy clergyman, when Schmucke, thus released, went to hear what he had to say. "You have no Madame Cibot now—"

"She is a monzder who has murdered Bons!" said Schmucke.

"But you *must* have *some one* by your side," replied Dr. Poulain, "for some one must sit up with the body to-night."

"*I* will zit up; *I* will bray to Got!" replied the guileless German.

"But you must eat!—who is there to do your cooking for you now?" observed the doctor.

"Grief takes away my abbedide!" replied Schmucke, artlessly.

"But," said Poulain, "you will have to go, accompanied by witnesses, and report the death; the body must be

stripped and wrapped in a shroud; the funeral must be ordered; and food prepared for the nurse who looks after the body and the priest who sits up with it. Can you do all that yourself? In the capital of the civilized world, people do not die like dogs!"

Schmucke's eyes grew big with fright. He was seized with a brief access of insanity.

"But Bons will not die — I will zave him!" he exclaimed.

"You cannot hold out long without getting a little sleep, and then who is to take your place? for Monsieur Pons must be attended to. There must be some one to give him his draughts, and to prepare his medicine—"

"Ah! dat is true," said the German.

"Well then," resumed the Abbe Duplanty, "I think of sending Madame Cantinet to you; she is a worthy, honest woman—"

So completely was Schmucke bewildered by the enumeration of his social duties to his dead friend, that he could have wished to die with Pons.

"He's a mere child!" remarked Poulain to the Abbe Duplanty.

"A ghild!" echoed Schmucke, mechanically.

"Well," said the curate, "I will go and speak to Madame Cantinet and send her to you."

"You needn't put yourself to that trouble," said the doctor; "she lives close by me, and I am going home."

Death is like an invisible assassin, with whom the dying carry on a combat. In the death-throes they receive their final wounds, and in the effort to return those wounds they struggle. Pons had now reached this final stage; he began to utter groans, interspersed with shrieks; whereupon Schmucke, the Abbe Duplanty and Poulain hastened to the bedside of the dying man. All at once Pons received in the center of vitality that final blow which severs the bonds that unite the body to the soul; regained, for a few moments the perfect calm which ensues when the death-struggle is over, and, restored to himself with all the serenity of death upon his countenance, glanced almost gayly at those who stood around him.

"Ah! doctor, I have had a hard time of it, but you were right, I am better now. Thanks, my good abbe; I was asking myself where Schmucke was."

"Schmucke has eaten nothing since four o'clock yesterday afternoon; you had no one to wait upon you, and it would be dangerous to call Madame Cibot in again—"

"She is capable of any atrocity!" said Pons, who made no attempt to disguise the horror with which the mere mention of Dame Cibot's name inspired him. "You are right; Schmucke requires the assistance of some one who is thoroughly trustworthy."

Hereupon Poulain interposed: "The Abbe Duplanty and I have laid our heads together, and—"

"Oh! thank you," said Pons. "I had not thought about the matter."

"—And the abbe suggested the name of Madame Cantinet—"

"Oh! the pew-opener!" cried Pons. "Yes, she is an excellent creature."

"She has no love for Madame Cibot," resumed the doctor, "and she will take good care of Monsieur Schmucke—"

"Send her to me, dear Monsieur Duplanty—her and her husband; then I shall feel easy. She won't steal anything that is here."

Schmucke had now repossessed himself of Pons's hand and was gleefully clasping it. He believed that his friend was restored to health.

"Let us be off, Monsieur l'Abbe," said the doctor; "I will send Madame Cantinet here forthwith; I understand these matters; 'tis very likely that she will not find Monsieur Pons alive."

XXVII.

DEATH IN ITS STERN REALITY.

While the Abbe Duplanty was engaged in prevailing on the dying man to engage

Madame Cantinet in the capacity of nurse, Fraisier had summoned the pew-opener to his office, and was subjecting her to his corrupting conversation and to the influence of his pettifogging artifices —an influence not easily resisted. Accordingly, Madame Cantinet, a lean, bilious-looking woman with big teeth and pallid lips, a woman who, in common with many women in the lower ranks of life, had been rendered stupid by misfortune, and had come to such a pass that even the smallest daily gains seemed affluence to her, was easily persuaded to introduce Madame Sauvage as charwoman. Fraisier's housekeeper had already received the word of command: and had promised to weave a net-work of iron about the two musicians, and to watch them as a spider watches a fly that has been caught in the spider's web. A licensed tobacco-shop was to be Madame Sauvage's reward. It was thus that Fraisier purposed to himself to get rid of his pretended nurse, and in her person to place a spy and a policeman at Madame Cantinet's elbow. As there was a servant's room and a small kitchen attached to the suite of apartments occupied by the two friends, Dame Sauvage would be able to find sleeping accommodation, and to do such cooking as Schmucke might require.

Pons had just drawn his last breath when the two women arrived, escorted by Dr. Poulain. The German was still clasping between his hands the hand of his departed friend, from which the warmth of life was gradually receding. He motioned to Madame Cantinet to be silent; but the martial aspect of Madame Sauvage threw him so entirely off his guard that he suffered a gesture—such as that masculine lady was thoroughly familiarized with—to escape him.

"This lady," said Madame Cantinet, "is a person recommended by Monsieur Duplanty; she has been cook to a bishop, and is honesty itself; she will look after the cookery."

"Oh, you may speak up now," cried the burly and asthmatic Madame Sauvage; "the poor gentleman is dead! he has just gone!"

At these words Schmucke uttered a piercing shriek; he could feel the ice-cold hand of Pons growing rigid, and he kept his eyes fixed upon those of Pons, the expression of which would soon have driven him mad but for the interposition of Madame Sauvage, who, accustomed, as she doubtlessly was, to scenes of this description, approached the bed, holding in her hand a looking-glass which she placed before the dead man's lips. When she saw that no breath escaped from them to dim the surface of the mirror, she snatched Schmucke's hand away from that of the corpse, exclaiming, as she did so:

"Let it go, monsieur, can't you? or you won't be able to get your hand away at all. You don't know how stiff the bones will grow! Dead folks grow cold quickly, I can tell you. If one don't lay out the body while it is still warm one, has to break the limbs later on—" To close the eyes, then, of the poor dead musician, fell to the lot of this terrible woman, who forthwith proceeded, as is the wont of those who follow the calling of sick-nurse—a calling to which she had devoted herself for the last ten years—to undress Pons and to lay him out at full length, placing the arms and hands close to the sides of the corpse, and drawing the bed-clothes over its face. All this was done with the cool and practiced skill of a shopman making up a parcel of goods.

"I want a sheet to wrap him in; where is one to be found?" she inquired of Schmucke, who was dismayed at her proceedings. He had seen religion treating with the most profound respect the being who was destined to so lofty a future beyond the skies. This species of packing, in the course of which his friend was treated as a *thing*, caused Schmucke a pang that was enough to destroy the very elements of thought.

"Do what you bleaze!" he mechanically replied.

This was the first time that this unsophisticated creature had seen any person die; and this person was Pons, his only friend, the only being who had understood and loved him!

"Well, then, I shall go and ask Ma-

dame Cibot where the sheets are to be found," said Dame Sauvage.

"We shall want a folding-bed for this lady to sleep upon," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke, who merely nodded his head and burst into tears. Thereupon, Madame Cantinet left the poor man in peace; but in an hour's time she came back to him and said: "Have you any money, monsieur, that you can give me to make some purchases with?"

Schmucke turned to Madame Cantinet a face whose expression would have disarmed the fiercest hate. He pointed to the white, wan, sharpened features of the corpse as if they were a sufficient answer to every question:

"Take everything, and let me weep and pray," said he, sinking down upon his knees.

Madame Sauvage meanwhile had rushed away to announce the death of Pons to Fraisier. Fraisier, on hearing this news, jumped into a cabriolet and drove straight to Madame Camusot's to bespeak, for the morrow, the power of attorney authorizing him to act on behalf of the heirs.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cantinet to Schmucke after an hour had elapsed since her former question; "I have been to Madame Cibot, who must be familiar with your household arrangements, to ask where I can lay my hands on what is wanted; but as she has just lost her husband she wellnigh killed me with abuse. Will you be good enough to listen to me, monsieur—"

Schmucke merely stared at the woman, who was all unconscious of the barbarity of her conduct; for the common people are accustomed passively to submit to the acutest moral suffering.

"Monsieur, we are in want of some linen for a shroud, and of money to buy a folding-bed for this lady, a kitchen-range, plates, dishes, and glasses; for we shall have a priest passing the night here, and the lady can find absolutely nothing in the kitchen."

"Why, monsieur," chimed in Dame Sauvage, "I *must* have some firewood and coals to prepare the dinner, and I can find nothing at all. There is nothing very astonishing in *that*, however, being as Dame Cibot found everything for you."

"But, my good lady," said Madame Cantinet, pointing to Schmucke, who was lying in a state of total insensibility at the feet of the corpse; "you will not believe me when I tell you that he won't reply to any question."

"Well, then, my darling," said Dame Sauvage; "since that is so, I will show you what we do in these cases."

Hereupon Dame Sauvage, having examined the room with a glance, just as robbers throw around them in order to discover the hiding places that are likely to contain money, went straight to Pons's commode, opened the top drawer, and there discovered the purse in which Schmucke had placed what remained of the money produced by the sale of the pictures. Taking up the purse she showed it to Schmucke, who gave a mechanical sign of assent.

"Here is some money, my darling!" said Dame Sauvage to Madame Cantinet. "I will count it and take what is necessary to buy what we lack—wine, food, candles, everything, in short, for nothing have they now. Search the chest of drawers for a sheet to wrap the body in. Well might they tell me that this poor gentleman was simple-minded. Simple-minded, good lack! I can't tell exactly what he is; but he is worse than simple-minded. He is like a new-born babe; we shall have to feed him with pap—"

Schmucke watched the two women and their proceedings exactly as a lunatic might have watched them. Broken down with grief, and plunged into a quasi-cataleptic state, he kept his eyes fixed upon the fascinating face of Pons, the contours of which had gained in purity under the influence of the absolute repose of death. Schmucke longed to die; he was utterly indifferent to all terrestrial things. Had the room been wrapped in flames, he would not have budged an inch.

"There are twelve hundred and fifty-six francs," said Dame Sauvage to Schmucke, who merely shrugged his shoulders. But when Dame Sauvage wanted to sew the body in the shroud and to measure the

sheet against the corpse, so that she might cut it to the proper length before she began to stitch it, there ensued between her and the poor German a fearful struggle. Schmucke behaved exactly like a dog that bites all those who attempt to touch his master's corpse; till Dame Sauvage, losing all patience, seized the old man, thrust him into an armchair, and held him there with herculean force.

"Now, now, my darling," cried she to Madame Cantinet. "Do *you* sew the body in its shroud."

When the operation was complete, Dame Sauvage restored Schmucke to his former position at the foot of the bed, and said to him: "Do you understand? It was absolutely necessary to truss the poor man like a corpse, as he is."

Schmucke began to cry; and the two women, leaving him to his own devices, proceeded to take possession of the kitchen, which they very soon stocked with all the necessaries of life. Having made out a preliminary bill of three hundred and sixty francs, Dame Sauvage set to work to prepare a dinner for four persons, and what a dinner it was, to be sure! There was the cobbler's pheasant—a fat goose—to form the staple of the meal; a sweet omelet; a green salad; and the prescriptive soup and *bouilli*, the ingredients of which were so superabundant that the broth looked like the jelly of meat.

At nine o'clock in the evening the priest sent by the curate to watch by Pons's body presented himself, accompanied by Cantinet, who brought with him four wax tapers and some of the church candlesticks. The priest found Schmucke stretched out at full length upon the bed beside the body of his friend, and holding it tightly clasped in his arms. Yielding to the authority of religion, and to that only, Schmucke tore himself away from the corpse, and sunk upon his knees, while the priest cozily ensconced himself in the armchair. While the latter was reading prayers, and Schmucke, kneeling before the corpse, was beseeching God to work a miracle, and unite him to Pons so that they might both be buried in one grave, Madame Cantinet had marched off to the Temple to buy a folding bedstead and a complete set of bed furniture for Madame Sauvage; for the purse of twelve hundred and fifty-six francs was in a state of pillage. At eleven o'clock Madame Cantinet came to see whether Schmucke would like a morsel to eat; but the German made a sign that he wished to be left alone.

"Supper is waiting for you, Monsieur Pastelot," said the pew-opener, turning to the priest.

When Schmucke found himself alone there stole over his features a smile resembling that of a madman who finds himself at liberty to gratify some longing as fantastic as the whims of a pregnant woman; he threw himself upon the body of his friend, and once more clasped it in a close embrace. When at midnight the priest returned and reprimanded Schmucke, the latter relinquished his hold upon the corpse, and resumed his prayers. At daybreak the priest departed; and at seven in the morning Dr. Poulain paid Schmucke a kindly visit, and pressed him to eat; but the German refused.

"If you don't eat something now, you will feel famished on your return;" said the doctor, "for you must go to the *mairie*, accompanied by the witness, to report the death of Monsieur Pons, and have it duly registered."

"I!" cried the German, in dismay.

"Who else? You can't avoid the necessity, since you are the only person who was present when he died—"

"I gannot walk," replied Schmucke, invoking the aid of Dr. Poulain.

"Take a vehicle," gently replied the hypocritical doctor. "I have already given a certificate of the decease. Ask some one in the house to go with you. These two ladies will look after the apartments while you are away."

It is extremely difficult to picture to one's self the full extent of the suffering to which the exactions of the law subject the genuine mourner. 'Tis enough to make one hate civilization, to make one prefer the customs of savages.

At nine o'clock Madame Sauvage con-

trived to get Schmucke downstairs by supporting him under the arm-pits; but when he had taken his seat in the hackney coach he was obliged to beg Remonencq to go with him to the *mairie* to register the death of Pons. In Paris, in the metropolis of this land which is intoxicated with the love of equality, inequality of rank stares you in the face, go where you may, do what you will. This persistent force of circumstances obtrudes itself upon our notice, even in the events that death brings in its train. Among the wealthy, some friend, relative, or professional man relieves the mourner from the burden of these harrowing details; but, like taxes, they fall in full force upon the poor—those helpless proletarians who have to bear the brunt of suffering.

"Ah! you have good reason to regret him," said Remonencq by way of response to a plaintive cry from the poor martyr; "for he was a fine fellow, a thoroughly honest man; and he leaves a noble collection behind him, too; but do you know, monsieur, that you, being as you are a foreigner, will be placed in a very uncomfortable position; for folks are a-saying in all quarters that you are Monsieur Pons's heir."

Schmucke did not hear one syllable of what was said to him. His grief was so profound as to border on insanity. There is a tetanus of the mind as well as of the body.

"And you would do well to get a lawyer or some professional man to act as your representative," pursued Remonencq.

"A professional man!" echoed Schmucke mechanically.

"You will find that you'll want some one to represent you. If I was you, now, I should get a man of experience—some man who is known in the Quarter—some one as you can trust. For my part, in all my little business matters I employ Tabareau, the bailiff. And if you gave a power of attorney to his managing clerk you wouldn't be worried, not one bit."

This suggestion, which Fraisier had prompted, and the offer of which Remonencq and Dame Cibot had mutually arranged, dwelt in Schmucke's memory; for on those occasions when (figuratively speaking) sorrow may be said to freeze the mind by arresting the normal current of ideas, the memory retains all such impressions as it accidentally receives. Yet while Schmucke was listening to Remonencq, the old German gazed at him with an eye from which all trace of intelligence had so entirely vanished that the broker held his tongue.

"If he remains in this idiotic condition," thought Remonencq, "it will be an easy matter for me to buy all the rattle-traps up yonder for a hundred thousand francs if *he* is the owner of them. Here we are at the *mairie*, monsieur," said he, aloud.

Remonencq was forced to help Schmucke out of the hackney coach and to support him in their progress to the office of the registrar of births, deaths, and marriages.

Arrived there, Schmucke found himself in the midst of a wedding-party; nor was this all; he was obliged to wait till his turn came; for by one of those coincidences that so often occur at Paris, the clerk had five or six deaths to register. During this interval the poor German must have undergone an agony scarcely less intense than that of the Saviour of mankind.

"Are you Monsieur Schmucke?" inquired a man dressed in black, addressing himself to the German, who was astounded at the mention of his name. At the person who thus accosted him Schmucke stared with the dazed expression with which he had encountered the remarks of Remonencq.

"What do you want with him?" said the broker to the stranger. "Can't you leave the man alone? Don't you see that he is in trouble?"

"You have just lost your friend, monsieur, and you would like to raise a fitting monument to his memory; for you are his heir," said the stranger; "I am sure monsieur would not like to act shabbily; monsieur will no doubt purchase a plot of ground in perpetuity for a grave. Then Monsieur Pons was such a friend to the arts! It would be a great pity not to

place upon his tomb Music, Painting, and Sculpture—three beautiful figures at the foot of the grave, bathed in tears—"

Remonencq here indulged in a repellent gesture worthy of a son of Auvergne, to which the man responded by another gesture which might be called a commercial gesture, and said as plainly as words could have said: "Can't you let me transact my business?"

The broker perfectly understood it.

"I am agent to the house of Sonet & Co., funeral monument contractors," pursued the tout, whom Walter Scott would have nicknamed *Young* Mortality. "If monsieur should think fit to intrust us with the order, we would save him the trouble of going into the city to purchase the ground needed for the interment of the friend whom the Arts have lost—"

Remonencq nodded his head by way of expressing his assent, and nudged Schmucke's elbow.

"It happens to us every day to undertake, on behalf of families, the due execution of all formalities," pursued the tout, encouraged by the Auvergnat's gesture. "In the first moment of sorrow it is very difficult for an heir to attend in person to these details, and we are accustomed to perform these little services for our clients. Our monuments, monsieur, are charged for at so much per meter, either in freestone or marble. We open the ground for family graves. We undertake everything at the most reasonable prices. It was our house that executed the magnificent monument of the beautiful Esther Gobseck and Lucien de Rubempre, one of the most magnificent ornaments of Pere-Lachaise. We employ the very best workmen; and," added he (as he saw another man dressed in black approaching, with the view of putting in a word for some other firm in the marble and sculpture line), "I invite monsieur to be on his guard against the small contractors, who turn out nothing but trumpery."

It has often been said that death is the end of a journey; but it is not generally known how thoroughly apposite is the metaphor as applied to death in Paris. A corpse, especially if it be the corpse of a man of quality, is greeted on *the somber shore* very much as a traveler disembarking in a seaport town is besieged and badgered by all the hotel touts in the place. Since philosophers and those families which, being convinced of their perpetuity, build themselves sepulchers just as they build themselves mansions, stand alone in taking any thought of death and of the social consequences that death involves, it always comes too soon; and this the more, in that a very intelligible sentiment precludes expectant heirs from treating it even as a possible event. Hence it almost invariably happens that those who have the misfortune to lose father, mother, wife, or child, are immediately assailed by business touts who take advantage of the confusion of distress to snap an order. In bygone days the funeral monument contractors (whose establishments are all grouped together in the vicinity of the world-famed cemetery of Pere-Lachaise, and have there formed a street which might well be called the Rue des Tombeaux) used to beset the heirs in the neighborhood of the grave or as they issued from the cemetery: but urged by competition—which is the genius of commerce—these contractors imperceptibly gained ground, and have nowadays invaded the city itself and pushed on as far as the approaches to the various *mairies*. In fact, into the very house of death do the touts of these enterprising men of business force their way, a design for a gravestone in their hands.

"*I* am doing business with this gentleman," said the tout of the firm of Sonet & Co. to the supervening tout.

"Pons deceased! Where are the witnesses?" sung out the attendant at the registry.

"Come, monsieur," said the tout, addressing Remonencq.

Remonencq begged the man to raise Schmucke, who remained seated on the bench like a mass of inanimate matter. The two men led him to the railing behind which the registrar shelters himself from the public grief. Remonencq—Schmucke's temporary providence—was assisted in his

task by Dr. Poulain, who had presented himself for the purpose of supplying the necessary information as to Pons's age and place of birth. The German knew one fact and only one—Pons had been his friend! When the signatures had been affixed, Remonencq and the doctor, followed by the tout, proceeded to place the poor German in the carriage, into which the zealous tout, in his anxiety to secure the order for the stone, likewise slipped. Dame Sauvage was on the lookout at the entrance gateway, and she, with the help of Remonencq and the tout of Messrs. Sonet & Co., carried the almost fainting Schmucke to his rooms.

"He is going to swoon," cried the tout, who was anxious to bring to a conclusion the piece of business which, according to him, was already on foot.

"You are quite right!" replied Dame Sauvage. "He has done nothing but cry for the last twenty-four hours, and has refused all nourishment. There is nothing like grief for exhausting the stomach."

"Now, my dear client," said the tout of Messrs. Sonet, "do just take a little broth; you have so many things to do, you know; you have to go to the Hotel de Ville to buy the ground on which you are about to erect a monument in commemoration of this friend of the Arts, and in token of your gratitude."

"Why, such conduct is not rational," said Madame Cantinet, bringing in some broth and a piece of bread.

"Bethink you, my dear sir," said Romonencq, "bethink you, if you are so weak as all that, to get some one to act as your agent; for you have your hands full of business: the funeral *must* be ordered! Sure*ly*, you don't want your friend to be buried like a pauper."

"Come, come, my good sir," said Dame Sauvage; and seizing a favorable moment when Schmucke's head was reclining upon the back of the armchair, she poured a spoonful of soup into his mouth and began to feed the reluctant German as if he had been a child.

"Now, if you were wise, sir, you would call some one in to act as your representative, since your desire is quietly to abandon yourself to your grief."

"Since monsieur intends to erect a magnificent monument to the memory of his friend, all he need do is to authorize me to take the necessary steps, and I will do—"

"What is all this about? What is all this about?" interposed Dame Sauvage. "Monsieur has given you an order? Who are *you*, pray?"

"One of the agents of the firm of Sonet & Co., my good lady, the largest contractors for funeral monuments in Paris," said the tout, taking from his pocket a card which he presented to Dame Sauvage.

"Well, well, all right, all right; we will send to you when it is convenient; but you mustn't take advantage of this gentleman's condition. You can see clearly that he is not in full possession of his senses—"

"If you can manage to secure us the order," whispered the tout of Messrs. Sonet & Co., to Madame Sauvage, as he led her out on to the landing, "I am authorized to offer you forty francs."

"Well, give me your address," said the mollified Dame Sauvage.

Schmucke, finding himself alone, and feeling all the better for the bread and soup which he had at least swallowed if he had not digested, now hurried back to Pons's room and resumed his prayers. He was plunged in the profoundest abysses of sorrow when he was recalled from his state of utter self-forgetfulness by a young man clad in black who was saying to him for the eleventh time: "Monsieur—" an interpellation which the more readily attracted the attention of the old man in that he at the same time felt a tug at his coat-sleeve.

"What do you want now?"

"Monsieur, we are indebted to Doctor Gannal for a sublime discovery; far be it from us to contest his glory; he has renewed the miracles of Egypt; but at the same time, certain improvements have been introduced, and the results we have obtained are quite surprising. Therefore, if you wish to see your friend again, just as he was when alive—"

"Zee him again!" exclaimed Schmucke. "Will he zbeak to me?"

"Well, not exactly. He will do everything *but* speak," replied the embalmer's tout. "And then he will remain to all eternity in the state in which he is when the embalmment takes place. The operation occupies only a few minutes; an incision in the carotid artery and the injection are all that is requisite; but it is high time to begin; if you were to delay the operation for another quarter of an hour you would be deprived of the sweet satisfaction of having preserved the body."

"Away wid you to de tefil!" said Schmucke; "Pons is a zbirit, and dat zbirit is wid God!"

"That fellow hasn't a grain of gratitude in him," said the stripling tout of one of the rivals of the celebrated Gannal, as he passed through the carriage gateway. "He declines to have his friend embalmed!"

"What can you expect, monsieur," said Dame Cibot, who had just had *her* darling embalmed. "The man is an heir, a legatee. When once the dead man's goose is cooked he is nothing whatever to them folks."

XXVIII.

HOW PEOPLE DIE IN PARIS.

An hour afterward Schmucke beheld Madame Sauvage, followed by a man who was dressed in black and looked like a workman, enter the apartment.

"Monsieur," said she, "Cantinet has been good enough to send this gentleman here; he is the coffin-maker to the parish."

The coffin-maker bowed with an air of commiseration and condolence, but still, like a man who is sure of his ground, and knows himself to be indispensable, he gazed with the eye of a connoisseur at the corpse.

"How would monsieur like the thing to be made? Of deal, plain oak, or oak lined with lead? Oak lined with lead is the correct thing. The body is of average length," said the coffin-maker, who began to handle the feet of the corpse in order to take its measure.

"Five feet six and a half," added he. "Monsieur no doubt intends to order a funeral service at church?"

Schmucke shot at the man a succession of glances resembling those of a madman meditating an assault.

"Sir," said Dame Sauvage, "you really ought to employ somebody to take all these matters of detail off your hands."

"Yez," assented the victim at last.

"Shall I go and fetch Monsieur Tabareau to you; for your hands will soon be quite full? Monsieur Tabareau, d'ye see, is the most trustworthy man in the district."

"Yes, Monsieur Dapareau! His name has peen mentioned to me," replied Schmucke.

"Well, then, monsieur will be at peace and at liberty to indulge his grief after one conference with his proxy."

At about two o'clock Monsieur Tabareau's managing clerk, a young man who intended to become a bailiff, modestly presented himself to Schmucke. Astonishing are the privileges of youth; it never inspires horror! This young man, whose name was Villemot, seated himself by Schmucke's side and waited for a fitting opportunity of speaking to him. This reserve made a very favorable impression on Schmucke.

"Monsieur," said the youth, "I am the managing clerk of Monsieur Tabareau, who has confided to me the task of looking after your interests in this place, and attending to all the details of your friend's interment. Is it your good pleasure that I should do so?"

"You will not zave my life, for I have not long to liff; but you will leave me in beace, will you not?"

"Oh, you shall not be exposed to a single interruption," replied Villemot.

"Well, what muzt I do to zegure dat?"

"Sign this document appointing Monsieur Tabareau your proxy in all matters relating to the succession."

"Goot, goot, giff it to me," said the

German, eager to sign the document without a moment's delay.

"No, no; I must first read the deed over to you."

"Read on."

Without having paid the slightest attention to the language of this general authority, Schmucke executed it; and the youth then proceeded to take Schmucke's orders with reference to the purchase of the plot of ground (which the German hoped might serve as *his* grave also) and with respect to the funeral service at the church. Villemot assured Schmucke that he would not be molested any further and would not be asked to find any money.

"I would giff all dat I bozzezz to be left alone," said the unhappy man; and he once more threw himself upon his knees before the body of his friend.

Thus then, Fraisier was triumphant; the legatee was unable to stir hand or foot beyond the circle within which Madame Sauvage and Villemot held him inclosed.

There is no sorrow sleep cannot subdue. Accordingly when the day was drawing to a close, Dame Sauvage found Schmucke fast asleep, stretched at full length across the foot of the bed on which the body of Pons was lying. Raising him in her arms she laid him in his own bed, and, having tucked him up with motherly care, left him. Schmucke slept till morning. When he awoke, or rather, when, after this brief truce, he was restored to the consciousness of his misfortunes, Pons's body was lying beneath the carriage gateway in such a state as is accorded to third-class funerals. In vain, therefore, did Schmucke search for the body of his friend in these apartments, which now seemed to him quite vast, and void of all save harrowing mementos.

Dame Sauvage, who ruled the old German with all the authority that a nurse exercises over her urchin, insisted on his eating some breakfast before he set out for church; and while the poor victim was forcing himself to eat, she lifted up her voice and with lamentations worthy of Jeremiah himself called Schmucke's attention to the fact that he had no black coat to put on; and indeed, it must be confessed that Schmucke's wardrobe, under the care of Madame Cibot, had, before Pons had fallen ill, arrived *pari passu* with Schmucke's dinner at its simplest expression—to wit, two pairs of trousers and two coats!

"Do you mean to say that you are going to attend Monsieur Pons's funeral dressed as you are? Why, its an outrage on decency, gross enough to make the whole Quarter cry shame upon you!"

"How would you have me go, den?"

"Why, in mourning, to be sure!"

"In mourning?"

"The usages of society—"

"De uzages of zoziety! Mudge I gare for all zudge trivialities!" said the poor man, who was now worked up to the highest pitch of exasperation that a childlike mind bowed down with sorrow can attain.

"Why, 'tis a perfect monster of ingratitude," quoth Dame Sauvage, turning to a gentleman who had suddenly entered the room, and whose aspect made Schmucke shudder.

This functionary, who was magnificently arrayed in coat and waistcoat of black cloth, black breeches, black silk stockings, white ruffles, silver chain with pendant medal, the primmest of white muslin cravats and white gloves; this typical official, stamped with one uniform stamp for all sorts and conditions of mourners, held in his hand an ebony wand, the symbol of his functions, while beneath his left arm he carried a three-cornered hat decked with a tri-color cockade.

"I am the master of the ceremonies," said this personage, in subdued tones.

The routine of his daily duties had accustomed this man to the conduct of funerals and brought him into close contact with groups of relatives plunged in a common sorrow—real or feigned. Hence he, like all his compeers, had contracted a habit of speaking in low and gentle accents; his mission was to be decent, polished, and conventional, like a statue representing the genius of death. His announcement caused Schmucke a nerv-

ous tremor akin to that which the sight of the public executioner would have excited.

"Monsieur, are you the son, the brother, or the father of the deceased?" inquired the man of office.

"I am all dat, and more—I am his friend!" said Schmucke, weeping profusely.

"Are you the heir of the deceased?" asked the master of the ceremonies.

"De heir?" echoed Schmucke. "All worldly matters are alike to me." And he relapsed into the attitude characteristic of his dull despair.

"Where are the relatives, the friends?" inquired the master of the ceremonies.

"Dere dey are, all of dem!" cried Schmucke. "*Dose* friends never gauzed my boor Bons any zuffering! Dey are all he gared for bezides me!"

"He is mad, monsieur," said Dame Sauvage to the master of the ceremonies. "Proceed, it is wasting time to listen to what he says."

Schmucke had now resumed his seat, and, having subsided into his previous idiotic condition, was mechanically drying his tears. At this moment Villemot, Maitre Tabareau's managing clerk, came into the room; whereupon the master of the ceremonies, recognizing in him the person who had given the directions for the funeral, said to him: "Well, monsieur, it is time to start; the hearse is at the door; but I own I have rarely witnessed such a funeral as this. Where are the relatives and friends of the deceased?"

"We have been somewhat pushed for time," replied Monsieur Villemot. "This gentleman's grief was so profound that he took no thought of anything; but there is only one relative—"

The master of the ceremonies cast a look of sympathy at Schmucke. That expert in sorrow was at no loss to distinguish the genuine from the false; so he went up to Schmucke and said to him: "Come, my dear monsieur, take courage! Think of the respect that is due to the memory of your friend."

"We forgot to issue invitations; but I took care to send a special messenger to Monsieur le President de Marville, the one relation whom you heard me allude to. There are no friends—I do not suppose that the people connected with the theater in which the deceased acted as conductor of the orchestra, will come. But I believe that this gentleman is his universal legatee."

"Then *he* must be chief mourner," said the master of the ceremonies.

"You haven't a black coat?" said he, interrogatively, as his eye fell upon Schmucke's costume.

"Dere is noting but mourning in my heart," said the poor German; "mourning so deep dat I can feel dat I am dying. Got vill not witdold from me de fafor of uniting me to my friend in de grafe, and I tank Him for it!"

So saying, he clasped his hands together.

"I have told our Board (which has already introduced so many improvements)," resumed the master of the ceremonies, addressing Villemot, "that they ought to set up a vestiary and lend out mourning costumes for hire—'tis a desideratum that becomes more and more urgent every day. But since this gentleman is the heir, he ought to wear the mourning cloak, and that which I have brought with me will envelop him from head to foot, so that no one will be able to detect the unsuitability of his dress. Will you have the goodness to stand up?" said he, turning to Schmucke.

Schmucke rose, but his legs gave way beneath him.

"Do *you* support him," said the master of the ceremonies to the managing clerk, "since you are acting as his proxy."

Villemot placed his arms beneath those of Schmucke, and thus supported him; while the master of the ceremonies, taking one of those ample, but hideous, sable mantles which are worn by heirs when they follow the hearse from the house of death to the church, fastened it under Schmucke's chin by means of a couple of black silk strings.

And lo, Schmucke in the garb of heir!

"And now, we have a serious difficulty to surmount," said the master of the cere-

monies. "There are four pall-tassels to be held. If no one attends the funeral, who is to hold them? It is now half-past ten," said he, after consulting his watch. "They are waiting for us at the church."

"Ah! Here comes Fraisier!" exclaimed Villemot, most imprudently.

But there was no one present to pick up this confession of simplicity.

"Who is this gentleman?" asked the master of the ceremonies.

"Oh! he's the family."

"What family?"

"The disinherited family. He is the proxy of Monsieur le President Camusot."

"Good!" said the master of the ceremonies, with an air of satisfaction. "We shall have at least two pall-bearers; you will be one, and he will be the second."

Delighted at finding a couple of pall-bearers, the master of the ceremonies went and fetched two pairs of splendid white deerskin gloves and politely handed a pair, first to Fraisier and then to Villemot.

"Will each of you two gentlemen oblige me by holding one of the pall-tassels?" said he.

Fraisier, ostentatiously attired in a complete suit of black—Fraisier, with his white tie and semi-official aspect, was enough to make one shudder. There were a hundred writs in his very look.

"Most willingly, monsieur," was his reply.

"If two other persons would but present themselves, we should have four pall-bearers," said the master of the ceremonies.

At this critical moment in came the indefatigable tout* of Messrs. Sonet & Co., followed by the only person who had not forgotten Pons, and bethought him of paying the last tribute of respect to the memory of the poor musician. This man was a supernumerary at the theater, whose office was to lay the music on the stands in the orchestra, and to whom Pons, knowing him to be a married man with a family, had been in the habit of presenting a monthly donation of five francs.

"Ah! Dobinard" (*Topinard*), exclaimed Schmucke, when he recognized the young man, "*you* love Bons, then!"

"Why, monsieur, every day, as sure as morning came, I have come here to learn how Monsieur Pons was going on."

"*Effery day!* Boor Dobinard!" said Schmucke, squeezing the understrapper's hand.

"But no doubt they took me for a relative of Monsieur Pons's, and received me with a very bad grace. It was no use my saying that I belonged to the theater, and that I came to hear how Monsieur Pons was getting on; they told me that they weren't to be taken in in that fashion. I asked to be allowed to see the poor invalid, but I was never permitted to go up to his rooms."

"Dat infamous Zibód!" said Schmucke, pressing the horny hand of the underling of the theater to his heart.

"He was the king of men, was that worthy Monsieur Pons. Not a month passed that he didn't give me five francs. He knew that I had a wife and three children. My wife is waiting at the church."

"I will zhare my pread wid you!" exclaimed Schmucke, in his joy at having near him a man to whom Pons was dear.

"Will you hold one of the tassals of the pall, monsieur?" said the master of the ceremonies. "We shall then have four pall-bearers."

For the master of the ceremonies had easily prevailed upon the tout of Messrs. Sonet & Co. to be one of the pall-bearers. That worthy, even had he been reluctant to undertake the office, could not have resisted its tempting perquisites—the splendid pair of gloves!

"It is now a quarter to eleven! We must really go down at once; the priests are waiting for us," said the master of the ceremonies.

Thereupon the six persons we have named began to march downstairs.

"Take care to secure the outer door and remain in the apartments," said the atrocious Fraisier to the two women who

* Tout, racing slang, a stableboy who pretends to sell information about the horses.

were standing on the landing; "especially if you want to be appointed custodian, Madame Cantinet. Ah! ah! 'tis forty sous a day in your pocket!"

Through one of those coincidences which are by no means infrequent in Paris, the entrance gateway was encumbered by two catafalques—and therefore by two funerals—that of Cibot, the defunct porter, and that of Pons. No one visited the brilliant catafalque of the friend of the Arts, there to pay a tribute of affection; whereas all the porters in the neighborhood crowded in, to sprinkle holy water on the mortal remains of the deceased porter. This contrast between the throng attendant on the funeral of Cibot and the solitude that surrounded the body of Pons was conspicuous, not only at the door of the house, but also in the street. There the only mourner who followed Pons's coffin was Schmucke, who was supported by an undertaker's man; for he staggered with weakness at every step. From the Rue de Normandie to the Rue d'Orleans (in which street the church of St. Francis is situated) the two funerals passed along, between two hedges of inquisitive spectators; for in this district, as we have already remarked, every incident is an *event*. Hence the splendid white hearse, with its depending scutcheon on which a large P was embroidered, and its solitary mourner, on the one hand, and the plain hearse adopted in funerals of the cheapest class, with its accompanying crowd, on the other, failed not to elicit considerable comment. Fortunate it was that Schmucke, dazed by the faces that thronged the windows, and by the two long rows of congregated quidnuncs, was deaf to every word that was uttered, and saw the vast concourse only through a haze of tears.

"Ah! 'tis the Nut-Cracker," exclaimed one, "the musician, you know!"

"Who are the pall-bearers, then?"

"Oh! nothing but actors!"

"See, there is poor Daddy Cibot's funeral! Well, there's one hard-working man the less! What a cormorant for work he was!"

"Ay, he never went out at all!"

"No, he didn't keep Saint-Monday."

"Ah! how fond he was of his wife, to be sure!"

"Yes, indeed; she's greatly to be pitied!"

Remonencq, following in the wake of his victim's hearse, received many a condolence for the loss of his neighbor.

Thus the two funerals reached the church. There Cantinet co-operated with the Swiss to shield Schmucke from the importunities of the mendicants. Villemot had promised the legatee that he should not be molested, and Villemot, true to his word, kept a watchful eye upon his client, and disbursed all the necessary expenses. The escort of from sixty to eighty persons, that accompanied the humble hearse containing the corpse of Cibot, followed it to the cemetery. When Pons's funeral issued from the church it was followed by four mourning coaches—one for the clergy and the three others for the relatives of the deceased.

But one carriage was quite sufficient; for the tout of Messrs. Sonet & Co. had rushed off, while the funeral service was in progress, to report the departure of the procession to M. Sonet, in order that he might be in readiness to present the design for the monument and an estimate of its cost to the universal legatee as he quitted the cemetery. Fraisier, Villemot, Schmucke, and Topinard occupied one coach; the other coaches, instead of returning to the undertaker's, drove to Pere-Lachaise, empty. This superfluous procession of unoccupied carriages is a very common phenomenon. When the deceased is a person unknown to fame, and there is consequently but a sparse collection of mourners, there are always too many mourning coaches. Deep, indeed, must have been the love inspired by the dead, during their lifetime, to induce the world of Paris—Paris, where every one would like to add a twenty-fifth hour to the day—to follow a friend or a relative as far as the cemetery! But the drivers would lose their drink-money if they shirked their duties; so, full or empty, the coaches go from the house

to the church, from the church to the cemetery, and from the cemetery back again to the house; and there the drivers claim their drink-money. The number of persons to whom Death is a drinking-trough is inconceivable. When the funeral ceremony is over, beadles, sextons, sprinklers of holy water, paupers, coffin-bearers, coachmen, grave-diggers—all these absorbent organisms—scramble, distended with liquor, into a hearse and are driven away.

From the door of the church (where the legatee, as soon as he appeared, was assailed by a swarm of beggars—whom the Swiss immediately repelled) to the cemetery of Pere-Lachaise, poor Schmucke was borne along much as criminals used to be dragged from the palace to the Place de Greve. He seemed to be following his own funeral, as he sat in the coach clasping the hand of Topinard, the only man who shared his genuine sorrow for the death of Pons. Topinard, meanwhile deeply impressed with the honor of having been selected as one of Pons's pall-bearers—Topinard, pleased with his ride—Topinard, the proud possessor of a pair of white deerskin gloves, was beginning to regard the day of Pons's funeral as one of the red-letter days of his existence. Schmucke, plunged in the profoundest sorrow, but deriving some support from the contact of the hand whose owner had a heart, passively submitted to be driven to the cemetery—just as an ill-starred calf is trundled unresisting to the shambles. Now, those who have had the misfortune to follow many a relative to the last resting-place, are well aware that, during the journey from the church to the grave, all hypocrisy is laid aside; for the distance to be traversed is frequently considerable—as, for example, it often is between the church where the service has been performed and the Cimetiere de l'Est, which is conspicuous among Parisian cemeteries, as the focus of every kind of variety and pomp, and is crowded with sumptuous sepulchers. The conversation is started by the indifferent; and, in the end, the saddest listen to and are amused by it.

"Monsieur le President had gone down to court, when the procession set forth," quoth Fraisier to Villemot, "and I deemed it unnecessary to call him away from his duties at the palace, since he could not have joined us in time. Inasmuch as he—the natural and lawful heir—has been disinherited in favor of Monsieur Schmucke, I thought it quite sufficient that he should be represented by his proxy." On hearing these words Topinard pricked up his ears.

"Who was that queer fellow who held the fourth tassel?" said Fraisier to Villemot.

"Oh! he's the tout of a firm of tombstone contractors who want to get an order for a tomb to be adorned with three marble figures representing Music, Painting and Sculpture, weeping over the grave of the deceased."

"Not at all a bad idea," replied Fraisier. "The old fellow certainly deserves it; but such a monument as that will cost seven or eight thousand francs."

"Oh! no doubt it will."

"If Monsieur Schmucke gives the order it cannot in any way affect the estate; for such expenses as those would soon eat up a succession."

"It might give rise to an action; but you would win it."

"Well, then," replied Fraisier, "it is his lookout! It would be a good trick to play these contractors," whispered he to Villemot; "for if the will be set aside, as I warrant it will be—or if no will were forthcoming, who is to pay them?"

Villemot greeted this suggestion with a monkey's grin; and thereupon the managing clerk of Monsieur Tabareau and the man of law proceeded to hold a whispered conversation together. But, spite of their precautions and the rumbling of the coach, the supernumerary, versed as he was in all the intrigues of the greenroom, guessed that the two limbs of law were bent upon involving the poor German in some difficulty, and finally caught the significant word, Clichy! Thereupon, the honest and worthy underling of the theater resolved that he would take Pons's friend under his wing.

On reaching the cemetery—in which Villemot, aided by the tout of Messrs. Sonet & Co., had bought from the municipality a plot of ground about ten feet three-quarters square, on the plea that he was about to erect thereon a splendid monument—Schmucke was conducted, by the master of the ceremonies, through a crowd of sightseers, to the grave into which Pons's remains were about to be lowered; but at sight of the rectangular hole, over which hung Pons's coffin, suspended on ropes which four men held in their hands, while the priest uttered the final prayer, the hapless German was so intensely affected that he swooned.

XXIX.

WHAT IS CALLED "OPENING A SUCCESSION" CONSISTS IN "CLOSING" EVERY DOOR.

TOPINARD, the tout of Messrs. Sonet & Co., and M. Sonet himself carried the poor German into the marble-merchants' establishment, where he received the most assiduous and generous attention at the hands of Madame Sonet and Madame Vitelot, the wife of Monsieur Sonet's partner. Topinard stood his ground, for he had seen Fraisier (whose face seemed to him to savor strongly of the gallows) in close converse with the tout of Messrs. Sonet & Co.

After the lapse of an hour—that is to say, at about half-past two—the poor harmless German recovered consciousness. Schmucke thought that he had been dreaming for the last two days, and that he would wake to find Pons still alive. His forehead was piled with wet cloths; he was plied with smelling-salts and vinegar, till at length he opened his eyes. Then Madame Sonet made him drink some good strong broth; for the marble-merchants had not omitted to set the *pot-au-feu* upon the fire.

"We don't often come across clients who feel so keenly as all that; still we do occasionally meet them, once in two years or so!" said the lady. At last Schmucke began to talk about getting back to the Rue de Normandie.

Thereupon Sonet produced the design and said: "This, monsieur, is the drawing which Vitelot has made expressly for you: he sat up all night over it! But he was in a happy vein. It will be a very fine monumenet—"

"It will be one of the finest in Pere-Lachaise!" cried little Madame Sonet. "But then it is your duty to show respect to the memory of a friend who has left you his whole fortune—"

Now, this design, which was supposed to have been made expressly for Pons, had, as a matter of fact, been prepared for De Marsay, the celebrated minister: but his widow, being desirous that his monument should be designed by Stidmann, the design prepared by these manufacturers of monuments was rejected; for a commonplace monument was disgusting to the widow. The three figures were originally intended to represent the three days of the Revolution of July, during which the great minister came to the front. By introducing sundry modifications, Sonet and Vitelot had since contrived to make *the three glorious days* represent the Army, Finance, and the Family, for the monument of Charles Keller—a monument which also was intrusted to the skill of Stidmann. For the last eleven years had this design been from time to time adapted to meet the varying predicaments of several bereaved families; but by counter-drawing, Vitelot had managed to transform the three figures into the genii of Music, Sculpture and Painting.

"It's a mere trifle if you take into consideration the amount of workmanship and the setting up; but it won't take more than six months," said Vitelot. "Here is the estimate and specification, monsieur — seven thousand francs, exclusive of the workmen's wages."

"If monsieur would like it in marble," chimed in Sonet, whose specialty was marble, "it will come to twelve thousand francs, and monsieur will immortalize his friend and self together."

"I have just this moment heard that the will will be disputed, and that the heirs will be restored to their rights," whispered Topinard to Vitelot; "you had better go and see Monsieur le President Camusot, for this poor inoffensive creature won't have a farthing."

"You are always bringing us clients of that kind!" said Madame Vitelot, turning round upon and beginning to quarrel with the tout.

Leaning on Topinard's arm, Schmucke walked back to the Rue de Normandie, for the mourning coaches had already driven back thither.

"Do not leaf me!" said Schmucke to Topinard, who so soon as he had confided the poor musician to the care of Madame Sauvage, wanted to get away.

"It is four o'clock, my dear Monsieur Schmucke, and I must go home to dinner —my wife, who is a box-keeper, won't know what has become of me. You know, the theater opens at a quarter to six."

"Yez, I know—but conzider, I am alone in de vorld, widout a friend. You, who have mourned for Bons, gif me a little guidance; I am in profound darkness, and Bons said that I was zurrounded by rogues."

"Yes, I very soon found that out; I have just saved you from being sent to Clichy!"

"Gligy?" exclaimed Schmucke; "I don't understand you."

"Poor man! Well! Make your mind easy; I will come and see you. Good-by."

"Atieu! for a little while!" said Schmuche, sinking down as if he were weary unto death.

"Adieu! mossieu!" quoth Dame Sauvage to Topinard, in a manner that made a forcible impression on the supernumerary.

"Ah! what is the matter with you, Mrs. Housekeeper?" cried Topinard jocosely. "There you stand like a villain in a melodrama."

"Villain yourself!" quoth the dame. "Why do you come here interfering? I suppose you'll be wanting to undertake Monsieur Schmucke's business; and to bleed him?"

"Bleed him, indeed! — your humble servant!" — retorted Topinard, proudly. "I am but a poor super at the theater, but I love artists, and, let me tell you, I have never asked any one for a farthing! Have I asked *you* to give me anything? Do I owe you anything—eh, old girl?"

"You are a super, and your name is—what?" asked the virago.

"Topinard, very much at your service—"

"Many thanks to you," said Dame Sauvage, "and present my compliments to medeme if you are a married man, mosieur. I know all I wanted to know, now."

"What ails you, my beauty?" said Madame Cantinet, coming forward.

"What ails me, little one? Why just this, that you must stay here and look after the dinner, while I proceed to put my foot into that gentleman's affairs—that's what's the matter with me!"

"He's down below talking to poor Madame Cibot, who's crying her very eyes out," replied Dame Cantinet.

Dame Sauvage ran downstairs so hastily that they trembled beneath her feet.

"Monsieur," said she to Fraisier, drawing him some little distance away from Dame Cibot, and pointing to Topinard as the supernumerary passed out, proud of having already discharged the debt he owed his benefactor, by employing a greenroom artifice — for every one connected with the stage has a certain fund of wit and humor—to save the friend of that benefactor from falling into a trap. In fact the supernumerary secretly resolved that he would protect the unsuspecting musician of his orchestra against the snares that would be laid for him.

"You see that little wretch?" pursued Dame Sauvage, "'tis a sort of a kind of an honest man who wants to poke his nose into Monsieur Schmucke's affairs—"

"Who is he?" asked Fraisier.

"Oh! a mere nobody—"

"In business, there is no such thing as *a mere nobody*."

"Well," said the dame, "he's an un-

derling at the theater; his name in Topinard."

"Good!" said Fraisier, "go on as you have begun, Madame Sauvage, and you will have your tobacco-shop."

Thereupon, Fraisier resumed his conversation with Madame Cibot—"I say therefore, my dear client, that you have been playing a double game with us, and, that we are in no way bound to keep terms with a partner who deceives us."

"And in what way have I deceived you, pray?" said Dame Cibot, with her arms akimbo. "Do you think that you're a-going to frighten *me* with your vinegar looks and freezing airs? You're just trying to forge excuses for going away from your word, and you call yourself a gentleman. Shall I tell you what you are? You're a scamp. Yes, yes, you may scratch your arm as much as you please; but put *that* in your fob—"

"Now let's have no angry words, my pet," said Fraisier. "Listen to me! You have feathered your nest. This very morning while the preparations for the funeral were in train, I found this duplicate catalogue, which is, throughout, in the handwriting of Monsieur Pons; and, by the merest chance, my eye encountered this;" and opening the catalogue, Fraisier read aloud these words:

"'No. 7. Magnificent portrait painted on marble, by Sebastian del Piombo in 1546, sold by a family which had carried it off from the cathedral of Terni. This portrait, the companion to which was a bishop, bought by an Englishman, represents a Knight of Malta praying, and was placed over the tomb of the Rossi family. But for its date the picture might be ascribed to Raphael. This little painting appears to me to be superior to the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the museum, which is somewhat faded, whereas the Knight of Malta is extremely fresh in consequence of the preservation of the coloring on the Lavagna (Slate).'

"I found, on examination," resumed Fraisier, "that place No. 7 was occupied by the portrait of a lady (signed Chardin), which had no No. 7! While the master of the ceremonies was making up his quorum of pall-bearers, I verified the pictures, and there are eight ordinary pictures, without numbers, in the places allotted to works which were described as masterpieces by the late Monsieur Pons, and are now no longer to be found. Finally there is missing a little picture on wood, by Metzu, which is described as a *chef-d'œuvre*—"

"Was *I* the custodian of the pictures?" asked Dame Cibot.

"No; but you were the confidential housekeeper in charge of Monsieur Pons's establishment, and if robbery has been committed—"

"Robbery indeed! Let me just n'inform you, monsieur, that the pictures were sold by Monsieur Schmucke, in obedience to the directions of Monsieur Pons, n'and to supply his wants."

"To whom were they sold?"

"To Messieurs Elie Magus and Remonencq."

"For how much?"

"Why, I really don't remember."

"Now listen to me, my dear Madame Cibot," pursued Fraisier. "You have feathered your nest, and feathered it well! I shall keep my eye upon you; I have you in my power. Serve me, and I will hold my tongue. In any case, you understand, you mustn't expect to receive anything from Monsieur le President Camusot, since you have thought fit to plunder him."

"I felt quite sure as it would all turn to pudding bones, as far as I was concerned, my dear Monsieur Fraisier," replied Dame Cibot, mollified by the words *I will hold my tongue.*

"There you are now," said Remonencq, coming to the rescue, "picking a quarrel with madame; it isn't right. The sale of the pictures was arranged, at Monsieur Pons's free will and pleasure, between himself and Magus and me; it took us three days to come to terms with the deceased, who positively dreamed about his pictures! We have formal receipts for the money, and if, as always happens, we gave madame a few forty-franc pieces, she had no more than we are in the habit of giving to the servants of the gentry-folks

with whom we do a bit of business. Ah! my dear sir, if you think as you are imposing on a helpless woman, you'll find yourself *very* much mistaken! Do you take me, Mr. Pettifogger? Monsieur Magus rules the market, and if you don't give way to madame, if you don't give her what you promised her, *I'll* be at your heels when the collection is sold, and you'll see what you'll lose if you have Monsieur Magus and me against you—us as can raise all the dealers against you. Instead of seven or eight hundred thousand francs, you won't get even so much as two hundred thousand!"

"All right! All right! We'll see about that! We won't sell at all," said Fraisier, "or, if we do, we'll sell in London."

"We know London quite well!" said Remonencq; "and Monsieur Magus has quite as much influence there as he has in Paris."

"Good-by, madame, I will settle your business for you," said Fraisier, "unless you continue to do exactly what I tell you," he added.

"You little pickpocket—"

"Take care," said Fraisier, "I shall soon be a *juge de paix*."

Thus, with mutual menaces, the force of which was correctly appreciated by each of them, did these two worthies part.

"Thank you, Remonencq," said Dame Cibot. "It's very pleasant for a poor widow to find some one n'as'll take her part."

That evening, at about ten o'clock, Gaudissard summoned to his private room the attendant on the orchestra of the theater. When Topinard presented himself, the manager was standing with his back to the fire-place, in a Napoleonic attitude which he had cultivated since he had assumed the direction of a host of actors, dancers, figuranti, musicians, and machinists, and been called upon to deal with authors. His habit was to pass his right hand beneath his waistcoat and grasp the left brace, while he presented the three-quarter face and gazed at vacancy.

"How now, Topinard; have you a private income?"

"No, monsieur."

"Then you are on the lookout for a better place?" inquired the manager.

"No, monsieur—" replied the supernumerary, turning pale.

"What the devil! your wife is box-keeper on the first tier. I showed my respect for my ruined predecessor by retaining her services. I gave you day-work by making you lamp-cleaner to the greenroom, and you have the musical scores to look after into the bargain. Nor is that all. You have an allowance of twenty sous to represent the monsters and lead the troops of devils when we bring hell upon the stage! Your position is the envy of all the supers in the house, and you are regarded with no favorable eye by your colleagues, my friend. You have enemies in the theater—"

"*Enemies!*" exclaimed Topinard.

"—And you have three children, the eldest of whom plays children's parts, and has an allowance of fifty centimes!—"

"Monsieur—"

"—Let *me* speak," cried Gaudissard, in a voice of thunder. "Holding the position you do, you want to leave the theater—"

"Monsieur—"

"—You must needs poke your nose into business matters and thrust your finger into succession-pies! Why, you luckless wight, you'll be crushed like an egg. I have a patron in the person of his Excellency Monseigneur le Comte Popinot—a man of talent and of high character, whom the king has been wise enough to summon to his council-table. Well, this statesman this first-rate politician—I am speaking of Count Popinot—has married his son to the daughter of the President de Marville, one of the most estimable and one of the most esteemed of the judges of the highest grade, one of the luminaries of the court at the palace—you know the palace, don't you? Well, then, this Monsieur de Marville is the natural heir of his cousin Pons, our former conductor, whose funeral you attended this morning. Now observe; I don't blame you for having gone to pay this last tribute of respect to

the poor fellow; but you will lose your berth if you interfere in the affairs of our worthy Monsieur Schmucke, toward whom I entertain the most friendly feelings, but who will shortly find himself placed in a very delicate position in relation to the natural heirs of Pons. And since this German is of very little consequence to me, while the president and Count Popinot are of a great deal of consequence to me, I recommend you to leave the worthy German to unravel his own affairs. The Germans have a special Providence of their own, and you would be entirely out of place as a subaltern deity. So remain as you are—a super! You can't do better!"

"Enough, Monsieur le Directeur," said Topinard, deeply grieved. Thus was Schmucke, who expected that the humble supernumerary, the only being, himself excepted, who had shed a tear over Pons's grave, would pay him a visit on the morrow, deprived of the only protector that chance had sent him. When that morrow dawned upon the luckless German and he gazed upon the empty rooms, he felt the immensity of the loss that he had sustained. On the two preceding days, the hurry of events and the turmoil that death brings in its train had involved Schmucke in the bustle and commotion that furnishes distraction to the eye. But in the silence that follows the burial of a friend, a father, a son, or a woman who was dear to us—the dull, cold silence of the morrow—there is something that is terrible—something that is icy. Poor Schmucke was drawn to Pons's chamber by an irresistible attraction; but, unable to endure the sight of the apartment, he immediately withdrew, and returned to the dining-room, where Madame Sauvage was laying breakfast. Schmucke placed himself at the table, but could eat nothing. Suddenly there came a smart ring at the bell, and three men in black entered, unopposed either by Madame Cantinet or Madame Sauvage. This trio consisted of Monsieur Vitel the *juge de paix*, his registrar and—Fraisier, who now, in consequence of the check he had sustained, through the execution of a formal will which destroyed that formidable weapon—the testament that he had so audaciously stolen—was more lean and hungry than ever.

"We have come to affix the seals of the law here, monsieur," said the *juge de paix* to Schmucke, mildly.

Schmucke, to whom these words were so much Greek, cast a timorous glance at the three men.

"We have come at the instance of Monsieur Fraisier, advocate, the proxy of Monsieur Camusot de Marville, who is the natural heir to his cousin the late Monsieur Pons," added the registrar.

"The collections are there, in the large salon and in the bedroom of the deceased," said Fraisier.

"Well, then, let us go in," said the *juge de paix*. "Excuse us, monsieur: pray go on with your breakfast; don't let us interfere with you."

The interruption of these three men in black had frozen the poor German with terror.

"This gentleman," said Fraisier, darting at Schmucke one of those poisonous glances wherewith he was wont to mesmerize his victims, just as a spider mesmerizes a fly, "this gentleman, who has managed to procure the making of a will *par devant notaire* in his favor, must be fully prepared for some opposition from the family of the testator. A family does not passively submit to spoliation at the hands of a foreigner; and we shall see which will be victorious, monsieur: fraud and corruption or the family! We, as the natural heirs, are entitled to demand the affixation of the seals; and affixed the seals shall be; and, moreover, it is my intention to see that this protective measure is carried out with the utmost possible rigor; and so it shall be."

"Mein Got! Mein Got! what zin againzt Heaven have I gommitted?" cried the inoffensive Schmucke.

"You are the talk of the whole house," said Dame Sauvage. "While you were asleep, there came a little stripling, dressed in black, a little puppy who said he was managing clerk to Monsieur Hannequin; and he insisted on speaking to

you; but as you were asleep and so thoroughly worn out with the ceremony of yesterday, I told him that you had given a power of attorney to Monsieur Villemot, managing clerk to Monsieur Tabareau, and that he must go and see Villemot if business was his game. 'Ah,' said the young man, 'so much the better, I shall soon come to an understanding with *him*. We are going to deposit the will in court as soon as we have exhibited it to the president.' Thereupon, I begged him to send Monsieur Villemot to us as soon as ever he could. Make your mind easy, my dear sir," continued Dame Sauvage, "you'll find folks to stand up for you; you won't be fleeced just as much as people choose; you'll have some one on your side who has teeth and claws! Monsieur Villemot will soon show 'em what's what! For my part, I've already had a tiff with that low-lived creature, Mother Cibot, a portress, forsooth, who must needs take upon herself to pass judgment on her lodgers, and who maintains that you've filched this fortune from the lawful heirs, that you kept Monsieur Pons shut up and made a mere tool of him, and that he was raving mad. I gave her a fine wigging, the wicked wretch, I promise you! 'You're a thief and a scum!' I says to her, says I; 'and you'll find yourself in the dock, on account of what you've stolen from your gentlemen.' And then she shut her mug."

"Monsieur," said the registrar, coming in to look for Schmucke; "do you wish to be present while the seals are being affixed in the chamber of the deceased?"

"Go on! Go on!" said Schmucke. "I brezume dat I shall be allowed to die in beaze?"

"People are always at liberty to die," said the registrar, "and successions form the bulk of our business; but I have seldom seen a universal legatee follow his testator into the grave."

"*I* shall follow *mine*," said Schmucke, who, after the repeated blows he had received, felt intolerable pangs in the region of the heart.

"Ah! here is Monsieur Villemot!" exclaimed Dame Sauvage.

"Monsir Fillemod," said the hapless German, "will you rebrezent me?"

"I hurried hither to tell you that the will is perfectly formal, and will no doubt be upheld by the court, which will put you in possession of the estate—and a fine fortune you will have."

"*I* a fine fortune!" ejaculated Schmucke, horrified at being suspected of cupidity.

"Meanwhile," said Dame Sauvage, "I should like to know what the *juge de paix* is about, with his tapers and little bits of tape."

"Oh! He is affixing the seals. Come, Monsieur Schmucke; you have a right to be present."

"No! No! do you go dere instead."

"But wherefore the seals, if monsieur is in his own house, and if everything belongs to him?" quoth Dame Sauvage, laying down the law after the fashion of women, who, one and all, interpret the code according to their own good pleasure.

"But monsieur is *not* in his own house, madame; he is in Monsieur Pons's house; everything *will* belong to him, no doubt; but when one is legatee, one cannot take possession of the property composing the succession without what is called a writ of possession. That writ is issued by the court. Now, if the heirs who have been ousted from the succession, by the voluntary act of the testator, oppose the writ of possession, there arises a lawsuit. And, inasmuch as it is uncertain to whom the succession will be awarded, all the goods and chattels of the deceased are placed under seal, and the respective notaries of the heirs and legatee will proceed to take the inventory in due course of law. Do you see?"

On hearing this jargon for the first time in the course of his life, Schmucke entirely lost his head. He allowed it to sink on to the back of the armchair in which he was seated; it felt so heavy that he could not support its weight. Villemot, meanwhile, entered into conversation with the registrar, and, with all the imperturbability of the professional lawyer, looked on during the apposition of the seals—a ceremony which, in the absence of any relative, is generally accom-

panied by a running commentary of jokes and remarks about the objects which are being thus locked up until the day arrives for their distribution.

At length the four men of law closed the door of the salon, and returned to the dining-room, whither the registrar betook himself. Schmucke mechanically watched the operation, which consists in affixing the official seal of the *juge de paix* to either end of a piece of tape stretched across the aperture, in the case of folding-doors; and in placing the seal upon the two lips of the chink, in the case of cupboards and of single doors.

"Let's pass on to this room, now," said Fraisier, pointing to the door of Schmucke's chambêr, which opened into the dining-room.

"Why, that is monsieur's own room!" exclaimed Dame Sauvage, rushing forward and placing herself between the door and the men of law.

"Here is the lease of the apartments," said the hideous Fraisier. "We found it among the papers, and it is not made out in the names of Messieurs Pons and Schmucke, but in the name of Monsieur Pons alone. The whole suite of rooms forms part of the succession, and—moreover," added he, opening the door of Schmucke's chamber, "look, Monsieur le Juge de Paix, the room is full of pictures."

"So it is," said the *juge de paix*, thus at once giving judgment in favor of Fraisier.

XXX.

"STRAWBERRIES."

"Stop a moment, gentlemen," said Villemot. "Do you suppose that you will be allowed to turn the universal legatee out of house and home, while his right to that character is as yet uncontested?"

"But it *is* contested," said Fraisier;* "we oppose the delivery of the bequest."

"Upon what grounds?"

* The reader will bear in mind that Fraisier means a strawberry plant.

"You shall soon learn, young man!" said Fraisier, satirically. "We do not, as matters now stand, refuse permission to the legatee to remove from this room whatever he is prepared to claim as his own private property; but placed under seal the room must be; and this gentleman may e'en go and find shelter wherever he chooses."

"Not so," said Villemot. "Monsieur Schmucke will continue to occupy his own room!"

"How so, pray?"

"Why," replied Villemot, "I shall apply for an interlocutory judgment, with a view to obtaining a declaration that we are joint lessees of these apartments, and you sha'n't turn us out of them. Remove the pictures; separate that which belonged to the deceased from my client's property, if you like—but here my client shall remain!"

"Young man!"

"I will go away!" said the old musician, whose energies returned to him when he heard this disgusting altercation.

"You had better!" said Fraisier. "It will save you some expense, for you would lose the day—the lease is perfectly regular."

"The lease! the lease!" cried Villemot. "What's the use of talking about the *lease*. 'Tis a question of *bona-fides*—"

"'Tis a question that cannot be determined, like a criminal case, by the evidence of ordinary witnesses. Are you prepared to involve yourselves in a maze of reports, verifications, interlocutory judgments, and an independent suit?"

"No! no!" cried Schmucke; "I will degamp, I will go away."

Schmucke's life—though Schmucke himself was unconscious of the fact—was that of a cynic philosopher, so extreme was its simplicity. His whole outfit consisted of two pairs of shoes, one pair of boots, two complete suits, twelve shirts, twelve neckcloths, twelve handkerchiefs, four undervests, and a superb pipe, which Pons had given him, together with an embroidered tobacco-pouch. Roused by the fever of indignation to an abnormal pitch of excitement, he went into his room, and

collecting all his baggage, placed it on a chair.

"All dat is mine!" said he, with a simplicity worthy of Cincinnatus. "De biano also is mine."

"Madame," said Fraisier to Dame Sauvage, "get some one to help you to remove this piano, and place it on the landing."

"You are a great deal too harsh," said Villemot to Fraisier; "Monsieur le Juge de Paix has the exclusive right to order what is to be done; he is sovereign judge in this matter."

"There is valuable property there," said the registrar, pointing to the room.

"Besides, monsieur quits the apartments of his own free will and pleasure," remarked the *juge de paix*.

"I never saw such a client in all my life!" said the indignant Villemot, turning round upon Schmucke. "You are as soft as pulp."

"What does it matter where one dies," said Schmucke as he retired from the apartments. "Dese men have digers' fazes—I will zend for my boor trifles."

"Where is monsieur going to?"

"Wherever Got bleazes!" replied the universal legatee, with a gesture of indifference that was sublime.

"Take care to let me know," said Villemot.

"*Follow him,*" whispered Fraisier to the chief clerk.

Madame Cantinet was appointed guardian of the seals; and out of the cash found upon the premises she received an advance of fifty francs.

"All goes well," remarked Fraisier to Monsieur Vitel as soon as Schmucke was out of hearing. "If you are prepared to resign your office in my favor, go and call upon Madame de Marville; you will have no difficulty in arranging matters with her."

"Your antagonist is a man of dough!" said the *juge de paix*, pointing to Schmucke, who had halted in the court to take one last long lingering look at the windows of the apartments.

"Yes, the thing is safe now," replied Fraisier. "You need not hesitate to marry your granddaughter to Poulain; he will be chief physician to the Quinze-Vingts Hospital."

"We'll see about it! Good-by, Monsieur Fraisier," said the *juge de paix*, with an air of jolly good-fellowship.

"*There* is a man of talent for you!" said the registrar. "He will travel far—the knowing dog."

It was now eleven o'clock. Mechanically did the old German glide into the route that he and Pons used to pursue together; and as he paced along he thought of Pons: Pons's image was perpetually before his mind; Pons seemed to be walking at his side.

Just as Schmucke reached the front of his theater, out popped Topinard, who had just finished cleaning the lamps of all the brackets. While thus engaged he had been pondering over the tyranny of the manager.

"Ah! dis is exactly what I wanted!" cried Schmucke, stopping the poor supernumerary. "Dobinard, *you* have a lodging, have you not?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"A home of your own?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Can you give me board and lodging? Oh! I shall be a goot paymaster; I have an income of nine hundred francs—and then I have not long to litf. I shall giff you ferry little trouble. I can eat almost anything! My bibe is my only bassion. And zince you are de only berzon who has zhared my grief for de deat of Bons, I lofe you!"

"I should be only too glad to do as you wish, monsieur; but I must tell you that Monsieur Gaudissard has given me a fine wigging—"

"A wigging?"

"I mean that he has soused my head—"

"Zouzed your head?"

"Yes; scolded me for taking an interest in you; therefore, if you come to live with me, we must keep it very dark! But I doubt whether you would stay with me; for little do you know what the home of a poor devil such as I am is like."

"I brefer de humble home of a man of feeling who has mourned for Bons to de

Tuileries in de zoziety of men wid de faces of tigers! I have just left Bons's rooms full of tigers who are going to defour eferyting!"

"Come along with me, monsieur," said the supernumerary, "and see for yourself. But— Well, after all, there is a loft— Let us consult Madame Topinard."

Schmucke followed Topinard as a sheep follows its shepherd. Topinard conducted him into one of those frightful localities that might fitly be termed the cancers of Paris. This spot is called Bordin Town. 'Tis a narrow passage lined by houses such as builders *run up* as a matter of speculation. It has an outlet into the Rue de Bondy, in that part of the street which is overshadowed by the immense pile of the Porte-Saint-Martin Theater—one of the warts of Paris. This passage, the path of which is hollowed out and sunk below the level pavement of the street, slopes down toward the Rue des Mathurins-du-Temple. The town is bounded by an inner street which runs at right angles to the main street, so that the two streets together form a T.

These two narrow rows of buildings contain about thirty houses six or seven stories high. In the inner courts of these houses, and in each of the tenements into which they are divided there is a shop, a work-room, or a manufactory of some kind or other. In fact, Bordin Town is the Faubourg Saint Antoine in miniature. Here there is a furniture-maker, there a brass-cutter; here theatrical costumes are fashioned, there a glass-blower or a china-painter has fixed his quarters; in short, Bordin Town turns out from its dim recesses the *article Paris* in all its fanciful varieties. This passage, like Commerce itself, is dingy but productive. It swarms with passengers, carts and drays. Its aspect is repellent, and in strict keeping with its aspect is the teeming population of the place—a manufacturing population, whose dexterity in handicraft is counterbalanced by the stupidity that handicraft engenders. It was on account of the lowness of the rents that Topinard had pitched his tent in this quarter, which, from an industrial point of view, might be called a flourishing quarter. His abode was situated in the second house on the left-hand side of the entry. The rooms he occupied were upon the sixth-floor, and looked out upon that belt of gardens, which still exist as appendages to the three or four large mansions that are to be found in the Rue de Bondy.

Topinard's apartments consisted of a kitchen and two other rooms. The first of these was the children's room, and contained two little bedsteads of white wood and a cradle. The second room was occupied by Topinard and his spouse. The kitchen did duty both as a breakfast-room and a dining-room. Above these apartments there was a kind of attic, six feet high, roofed with zinc, and having a sky-light for a window. Access to this attic was obtained by means of a staircase of white wood—a staircase which in builders' slang would be called "*a miller's ladder*." This room, which was intended for a servant's room, entitled Topinard's lodgings to be styled a complete suite, and raised the rental to the sum-total of four hundred francs. At the entrance to the apartments there was a kind of arched vestibule, lighted by a small round window in the wall of the kitchen and formed by the junction of the outer door of the kitchen and the door of the first room—three doors in all. This vestibule served to conceal the kitchen. A family of five persons (three of whom were children) found shelter in these apartments, which were hung with hideous paper at six sous the piece, floored with bricks, garnished with fire-places of that particular description called fire-places *à la capucine*, and painted with common paint, to imitate wood.

The deep scratches inflicted on such portions of the walls as were within the reach of the children's arms may be readily imagined: but the rich would find a difficulty in picturing to themselves the simplicity of the kitchen range, which consisted of a meat-hastener, a boiler, a gridiron, a stew-pan, two or three coffee-pots and a frying-pan. The crockery, of white and brown earthenware, was worth at least twelve francs. The table did

duty both as a kitchen table and a dining-room table into the bargain. The furniture consisted of a couple of chairs and a couple of stools. The stock of wood and coal was stowed away beneath the cooking-stove, while in another corner of the room stood the tub, wherein, at nighttime, the family linen underwent frequent lavation. The room in which the children found a local habitation was traversed by clothes-lines and adorned with playbills and with engravings extracted from newspapers or from the prospectuses of illustrated works. It was obvious that the elder little Topinard (whose schoolbooks encumbered one corner of the room) acted as superintendent of the household when six o'clock came and father and mother were called away to the theater. In full many a humble family, a child of six or seven years is called upon to play the part of mother in relation to its sister and brothers.

This slight sketch will suffice to show that the Topinards were (as the now proverbial saying runs) poor but honest. Topinard was about forty years old, and his companion (who had formerly been a chorus leader at the theater, and mistress of the insolvent manager, Gaudissard's immediate predecessor) was about thirty. Lolotte had been a handsome woman; but the misfortunes which overtook the late manager had reacted upon her to such an extent that she found herself reduced to the necessity of contracting a (stage) marriage with Topinard. She entertained no doubt that, so soon as the joint savings of herself and her companion should reach the sum-total of a hundred and fifty francs, Topinard would fulfill his vows by making her his lawful wife—were it only for the sake of legitimatizing his children, whom he idolized. When Madame Topinard had any leisure time in the morning she plied her needle for the wardrobe of the theater. By dint of superhuman labor these two courageous supernumeraries contrived between them to realize an annual income of nine hundred francs.

When Topinard and Schmucke had reached the third-floor, Topinard, as each fresh flight of stairs presented itself, cried out to his companion by way of encouragement: "*One* story more!" But so profound was Schmucke's sorrow that he did not even know whether he were going upstairs or down.

At the moment when Topinard, who, like all persons of his degree, was dressed in white holland, opened the door of the room, the voice of Madame Topinard was heard exclaiming: "Come now! children, be quiet, here comes papa!" And since the children, no doubt, did exactly what they pleased with *papa*, the eldest continued to command a charge—a souvenir of the Cirque Olympique—with the broomstick as a war-horse, while the second went on blowing a tin whistle, and the third brought up the rear-guard of the army as well as his little legs would let him. The mother meanwhile was busy stitching a theatrical costume.

"Silence!" shouted Topinard, in a formidable voice. "Silence, or I shall strike!" ("I am always obliged to say that to them," he whispered to Schmucke.)

"Look here, my darling," said the supernumerary to the box-opener, "here is Monsieur Schmucke, the friend of that poor Monsieur Pons. He does not know where to go to, and would like to live with us. I warned him that we were anything but swells, that we lived on a sixth story, and had nothing better than a loft to offer him; but it was all to no purpose; he had set his heart upon it—"

Schmucke meanwhile had seated himself in the chair which the woman had brought forward for him; and the children, cowed by the advent of a stranger, had formed a little group and betaken themselves to the silent, exhaustive, but rapid scrutiny characteristic of childhood, which, like the dog, is guided by instinct rather than by reason. Schmucke, on his part, fell to studying this graceful little group; one member of which—the trumpeter—was a little girl with magnificent light hair.

"Zhe looks like a little German girl!" said Schmucke, beckoning the child to come to him.

"The gentleman will be very uncomfortable in the loft," said the box-opener.

"If I were not obliged to keep the children under my eye, I would gladly offer him our room."

She then opened the door of her own room and ushered Schmucke into it. This room contained all the luxury that the establishment could boast. There was a mahogany bedstead furnished with curtains of blue calico fringed with white. The window-curtains also were made of blue calico of the same kind and pattern. The chest of drawers, writing-table and chairs, though all of them were of plain mahogany, were in apple-pie order. On the mantel-shelf there were a time-piece and two candelabra—articles which had evidently been presented to Lolotte in former days by the bankrupt manager, whose portrait, an execrable daub by Pierre Grassou, hung upon the wall above the chest of drawers. It was natural enough that the children, forbidden as they were to enter this sanctum, should seize this chance of catching a stolen glimpse of it.

"Now, monsieur would be very comfortable *here*," said the box-opener.

"No, no!" replied Schmucke. "Ah, no; my days are numbered; all I need is some nook wherein to die."

The door of the sanctum having been closed, the party mounted to the attic. Directly Schmucke reached it, he exclaimed: "Ah! dat is egzactly what I want. Before I went to live wid Bons I was never better lodged dan dat."

"Very well, then; all we have to do is to buy a truckle-bed, a couple of mattresses, a bolster, a pillow, two chairs, and a table. *That* won't kill any one—it may come to a hundred and fifty francs; basin, jug, and a small carpet for the bedside included."

So the whole matter was arranged; *only*—the hundred and fifty francs were not forthcoming.

But as Schmucke was within a stone's-throw of the theater, it very naturally occurred to him, seeing how poor his new friends were, to go thither and claim the salary due to him from the manager. So to the theater he forthwith repaired and there found Gaudissard.

The manager received Schmucke with the somewhat overstrained politeness which he habitually displayed toward the artists of his theater, and was astonished at Schmucke's demanding a month's salary. Nevertheless, his claim appearing, on examination, to be well-founded, the manager exclaimed:

"Well! deuce take it, my worthy friend! The Germans, it seems, always know how to reckon, even when they are in tears. I thought you would have been sensible of my present of a thousand francs—a full year's salary—which I sent you, and that it would make us quits!"

"We did not receive a zingle farding," said the worthy German; "and if I have applied to you for money it is because I am in de street and have not one farding. To whom did you intrust de brezent?"

"To your portress!"

"To Madame Zibod!" exclaimed the musician. "Why, she killed Bons—robbed him, zold him. She tried to burn his will. She is a fillain, a monzder!"

"But, my good fellow, how comes it that you are in the street and without a shelter when you are the universal legatee. That is not logical, as we say."

"Dey turned me out-of-doors. I am a foreigner. I know noting of your law—"

"Poor old man!" thought Gaudissard, who foresaw what was likely to be the issue of so unequal a combat. "Now listen to me," said he, aloud. "Shall I tell you what you ought to do?"

"I have an agent."

"Well, then; enter into a compromise with the legal heirs at once. They will give you a certain sum down, and an annuity, and you will live in peace—"

"Dat is all I want!" replied Schmucke.

"Well, then, leave *me* to make the necessary arrangements on your behalf," said Gaudissard, to whom Fraisier, on the previous evening, had imparted his *modus operandi*.

Gaudissard's idea was that he would be able to ingratiate himself with the youthful Viscountess Popinot and her mother by bringing this dirty piece of business to a conclusion. I shall be a

councilor of state, at the very least," said he to himself.

"You have my authority to act for me—"

"Well, then, just let's see how matters stand. In the first place, here are a hundred pounds," said the Napoleon of the boulevard theaters, taking from his pocket fifteen louis and presenting them to the old musician. "Those belong to you; 'tis six months' salary in advance. You can return them to me in case of your throwing up the theater. Now let us reckon: what are your annual expenses? What do you require to live upon comfortably? Come now, arrange for a Sardanapalian existence!"

"I only want a summer suit and a winter suit—"

"Three hundred francs," said Gaudissard.

"Shoes, four pairs—"

"Sixty francs."

"Stockings."

"Twelve pairs — that's thirty-six francs."

"Six shirts."

"Six calico shirts, twent-four francs; the same number of linen ones, forty-eight; say seventy-two francs. We have got to four hundred and sixty-eight francs; let's say five hundred francs, including neckcloths and handkerchiefs; then one hundred francs for washing — six hundred francs. Now, what do you require to live upon? Three francs a day?"

"No, dat is too much!"

"Well, but you will have to buy hats. That makes fifteen hundred francs; and five hundred francs for rent, two thousand. Would you like me to procure you an annuity of two thousand francs, well secured?"

"Den, dere is my tobacco."

"Two thousand four hundred francs! Ah, Daddy Schmucke. You call it *tobacco*, do you? Well, you shall have your *tobacco*. Then the annuity is to be two thousand four hundred francs."

"Dat is not all. I want a zertain zum in ready money!"

("Ah! The premium of course! Oh, these Germans! They call themselves simple! The old Robert Macaire," said Gaudissard to himself.) "Well, what do you want?" repeated he. "But mind you, this must be all."

"I want de money to bay a zagred debt," said Schmucke.

("A debt, eh?" said Gaudissard to himself. "What a rascal it is! Why, he's worse than a young hopeful! He's going to invent some bills of exchange now! We shall have to put a stop to this. This Fraisier don't take a comprehensive view of things!) What debt are you referring to, my good fellow? Say on!"

"Dere is but one man who zhared my grief for Bons's death; he has a nice little girl with magnificent hair; zhe reminded me, at onze, of de genius of my dear Germany, which I ought never to have left. Baris is not goot for de Germans. Dey only get laughed at here!" said Schmucke, nodding his head with the air of one who is thoroughly persuaded that he has a clear insight into the ways of this wicked world.

"He is mad," said Gaudissard to himself.

And a tear stole to the eye of the manager, who felt a twinge of compassion for the inoffensive, artless old man.

"Ah! *you* understand me, Monzir le Tirecdir! Well, dis man wit de little girl is Dobinard; Dobinard who attends to de orgeztra, and lights de lamps. Bons liked him and used to help him. He is de only berzon who followed de funeral of my only friend to de church and to de zemetery. I want tree touzand francs for him and tree touzand francs for de little girl—"

"Poor man!" said Gaudissard, aside.

Relentless *parvenu* as he was, Gaudissard was touched by Schmucke's magnanimity, and by his gratitude for an act which, though it would have seemed the veriest trifle in the eyes of the world, outweighed (like Bossuet's glass of water) the victories of conquerors in the estimation of this meek and humble Christian. Beneath all Gaudissard's vanity, beneath his burning thirst for success, beneath his fierce desire to place himself on a level

with his friend Count Popinot, there lay a good heart and a kindly disposition. He therefore rescinded his rash judgment in regard to Schmucke and passed over to his side.

"You shall have all you ask for. But, my dear Schmucke, I will do even more than that; Topinard is a man of integrity, is he not?"

"Oh, yes; I saw him but now in his humble home, where he lives contentedly among his children."

"I will give him the post of treasurer—for Daddy Baudrand is on the point of leaving us."

"Oh, may Got bless you!" exclaimed Schmucke.

"Well, then, my good and worthy fellow, join me at four o'clock this afternoon at the house of Berthier, the notary; all shall be in readiness, and you will be beyond the reach of want for the rest of your days. You shall have your six thousand francs, and you shall hold the same position under Garangeot as you held under Pons, and at the same salary."

"No," said Schmucke, "I shall not liff; I have no heart for anyting; I feel dat my healt is undermined."

"Poor sheep!" moralized Gaudissard, as he bowed to the departing Schmucke. "Well, after all, one lives on mutton cutlets; and as the sublime Beranger puts it: 'Poor sheep, poor sheep, ye are doomed to be shorn!'" and humming this political opinion with a view to subduing his emotion, the manager told the office page to send his carriage round.

When he had reached the foot of the staircase, he called out to the coachman: "Rue de Hanovre." The man of ambition had reappeared in his totality. The council of state loomed before his eyes.

XXXI.

THE BITTER END.

While Gaudissard was on his way to the Rue de Hanovre, Schmucke was engaged in buying some flowers and cakes for Topinard's children. His heart was almost light as he took these offerings home; and, as he uttered the words: "I make you a present of de gakes," a smile played upon his lips which for three long months had known no smile—a smile that would have made an observer shudder.

"I make you a present of de gakes on one gondition."

"You are too good, monsieur," said the mother.

"De little girl must giff me a kiss, and put de flowers in her hair and arrange her hair as de little German girls do."

"Olga, my child, do exactly what this gentleman asks you," said the box-opener with an air of severity.

"Don't speak grossly to my little German girl," pleaded Schmucke: for the sight of the little creature brought his dear Germany before his eyes.

"Three commissionaires are on their way here with all the rattle-traps upon their shoulders," said Topinard, bursting into the room.

"Ah!" said Schmucke. "Here are two hundred francs to pay for them all, my friend. But—you have a gentle greature for your mate; you will marry her, won't you? I will giff you tree tousand francs; de little girl shall have a marriage bortion of tree tousand francs, which you can invest in her name. And you are not to be a supernumerary any longer—you are to be de treasurer of de teater."

"*I* to have Daddy Baudrand's place?"

"Yes."

"Who told you so?"

"Monsir Cautissard."

"Oh! it's enough to make one mad with joy! Here, Rosalie, I say, won't the folks at the theater be vexed! But it *can't* be true," he added.

"Our benefactor mustn't be huddled away in an attic."

"Bah! for the few days dat I have to liff it will be quite goot enough," said Schmucke. "Goot-by. I am going to de zemetery to see what dey have done wit Bons, and to order zome flowers for his grafe."

Madame Camusot meanwhile was a prey to the liveliest alarms. Fraisier,

Godeschal, and Berthier were in consultation at her house. Berthier the notary, and Godeschal the solicitor, considered that the will drawn up by two notaries in the presence of two witnesses was (in consequence of the clear and concise manner in which it had been framed by Leopold Hannequin) quite beyond the reach of attack. According to the worthy Godeschal, Schmucke, even if his present adviser succeeded in throwing dust in his eyes, would, sooner or later, learn how matters really stood; were it only from the lips of one of those advocates who, in order to distinguish themselves, have recourse to acts of generosity and delicacy. The two ministerial officers, therefore, ere they quitted the house of Madame Camusot, advised her to beware of Fraisier, about whose character they had, very naturally, instituted certain inquiries. While this caution was being given, Fraisier, who had just returned from witnessing the apposition of the seals, was drawing up a summons in the president's study, into which he had been ushered by Madame Camusot at the instigation of the two ministerial officers to whom the whole affair seemed (to use their own expression) too dirty for a president to meddle with, and who were consequently anxious to express their opinion to Madame Camusot without being overheard by Fraisier.

"Well, madame, what has become of the two gentlemen?" inquired the quondam solicitor of Mantes.

"Why, they have flown, after giving me a parting recommendation to throw up the whole concern!" replied Madame de Marville.

"*Throw it up!*" exclaimed Fraisier, in accents of concentrated rage. "Just listen to this, madame."

And so saying, he read aloud the following document:

"On the petition of etc., etc. (I omit the verbiage.) Whereas, a will has been deposited in the hands of Monsieur le President of the tribunal of first instance, which will was received by Maitre Leopold Hannequin and Maitre Alexandre Crottat, notaries of Paris, accompanied by two witnesses (to wit): Messieurs Brunner and Schwab, foreigners domiciled at Paris, by which said will Monsieur Pons (deceased) has disposed of his estate to the prejudice of the petitioner his lawful and natural heir, and in favor of one Monsieur Schmucke, a German;

"And whereas, the petitioner undertakes to prove that the said will is the outcome of the most odious undue influence, and the result of maneuvers which the law condemns; and whereas, it will be shown by the evidence of certain eminent personages that the intention of the testator was to bequeath his fortune to Mademoiselle Cecile, daughter of the said Monsieur de Marville; and the will which the petitioner claims to have set aside was extorted from the weakness of the testator when he was in a state of absolute imbecility;

"And whereas, Monsieur Schmucke, with a view to procuring this universal bequest, kept the testator in the closest seclusion, and prevented the family of the testator from obtaining access to his death-bed; and moreover, when once he had achieved his object, proceeded to acts of flagrant ingratitude which scandalized the inhabitants of the house in which he dwelt and of the surrounding neighborhood, who were accidentally present in order to pay their last respects to the porter of the house in which the testator died;

"And, whereas facts of still greater import, facts of which the petitioner is at the present moment engaged in obtaining proof, will be formally averred before the judges of the tribunal;

"I, the undersigned bailiff, etc., etc., do hereby, in the said name, etc., etc., summon the said Monsieur Schmucke, etc., etc., to appear before the judges of the first chamber of the tribunal, to be present at the declaration that the will received by Maitres Hannequin and Crottat, being the outcome of the most conspicuous undue influence, will be regarded as void and of none effect, and I do moreover, in the said name protest against the quality and capacity of universal legatee which the said Monsieur Schmucke

might assume, inasmuch as I have heard the petitioner oppose, as in fact he does, by his petition of this day's date presented to Monsieur le President, oppose the delivery of possession to the said Monsieur Schmucke, and I have left a copy of these presents (the costs of which amount to, etc., etc.) with him, etc., etc."

"Now, Madame la Presidente, I know my man; and when he has read this *billet-doux* he will come to terms; he'll consult Tabareau, and Tabareau will tell him to accept our offer. Are you prepared to grant the annuity of three thousand francs?"

"Undoubtedly. I only wish I were on the point of paying the first quarter of it."

"That will be the case before three days are over our heads; for this summons will overtake him when he is under the stunning influence of recent sorrow, for he regrets Pons, does the poor man. He took the loss very much to heart."

"Can the summons, when once issued, be withdrawn?" said Madame de Marville.

"Assuredly, madame; it is always open to one to desist."

"Well, then, you can go on, monsieur," said Madame de Marville. "Pursue your course. Yes, the purchase which you have arranged for me is well worth the trouble. I have, moreover, settled the business of Vitel's resignation, but you will pay Vitel his sixty thousand francs out of the proceeds of Pons's estate. So you see, success is essential."

"You have his resignation?"

"Yes, monsieur; Monsieur Vitel relies upon Monsieur de Marville."

"Very good, madame; I have already released you from the payment of the sixty thousand francs which, I calculated, must be given to this vile portress, this Madame Cibot. But I still wish to secure the tobacco shop for Madame Sauvage, and the nomination of my friend Poulain to the vacant post of chief physician to the Quinze-Vingts."

"Agreed! Everything is arranged."

"Well, then, 'tis all settled," said Fraisier. "Every one is on your side in this matter; even Gaudissard, the theatrical manager to whom I paid a visit yesterday, and who promised me that he would crush a certain supernumerary who might interfere with our projects."

"Oh, I know all about it. Monsieur Gaudissard is ready to do anything for the Popinots!"

Fraisier now took leave of Madame de Marville. Unfortunately he did not meet Gaudissard, and the fatal summons was launched without delay.

The avaricious will comprehend, as readily as the upright will condemn, the elation of Madame de Marville when, twenty minutes after Fraisier's departure, Gaudissard arrived and informed her of his conversation with poor Schmucke. Madame de Marville indorsed with her approbation all that had been done; and felt unboundedly thankful to the manager for scattering all her compunctious visitings of nature by sundry remarks which seemed to her to be full of good sense.

"As I was on my way hither, Madame la Presidente," said Gaudissard, "it occurred to me that, after all, this poor devil wouldn't know what on earth to do with his fortune! He is a being of patriarchal simplicity! He is artless, he is a German; he really ought to be stuffed and put under a glass case like a little waxen image of our Saviour. I mean to say that, in my opinion, even as matters now stand, he scarcely knows what to do with his two thousand five hundred francs a year, and that you are supplying him with temptations to dissipation—"

"It shows," said Madame de Marville, "a very noble heart to enrich the young man who is sorry for the death of our cousin. For my part, I deeply regret the little misunderstanding which set us at loggerheads—Monsieur Pons and me. If he had only come back, all would have been forgiven. If you only knew—my husband positively misses him. Monsieur de Marville was quite upset at not having been informed of his decease, for he has a religious regard for family duties; he would have attended the service and followed the funeral even to the grave, and I

myself would have been present at the funeral mass—"

"Well, then, fair lady," said Gaudissard; "will you be good enough to have the deed drawn up. I will bring the German to you at four o'clock. Commend me, madame, to the good graces of your charming daughter the Viscountess Popinot; and beg her to tell my illustrious friend (her worthy and excellent father-in-law) how thoroughly devoted I am to him and his; and entreat him to continue his valuable favors to me. I owe my very existence to his uncle the judge, and my fortune to *him;* would that I might be indebted to you, madame, and to your daughter for that consideration which attaches to persons of influence and standing. I want to abandon the stage and become a man of solid position."

"You are so already, monsieur," said Madame de Marville.

"Charming!" exclaimed Gaudissard, as he kissed the lady's skinny hand, and withdrew.

At four o'clock there were gathered together in the private office of Monsieur Berthier, the notary; firstly, Fraisier (by whom the deed of compromise had been drawn up); secondly, Tabareau, Schmucke's proxy; and thirdly (piloted to the spot by Gaudissard) Schmucke himself. The six thousand francs which Schmucke had asked for, and the six hundred francs of the first quarterly installment of the annuity, Fraisier had carefully arrayed in bank-notes upon the notary's desk, under the very eyes of the poor German, who, dazzled by the sight of so much money, paid not the slightest attention to the reading of the document. Indeed, it must be confessed that the poor fellow, whom Gaudissard had pounced upon just as he was returning from the cemetery (where he had talked to Pons and promised to rejoin him) was not in full possession of all his faculties, which had already been severely shaken by so many shocks. He took no heed, therefore, of the preamble of the deed, wherein he was represented as being assisted by Maitre Tabareau, his agent and adviser, and the grounds of the suit instituted by the president in the interests of his daughter were recapitulated. 'Twas a sorry part that the poor German was called upon to play; for by signing the deed he admitted the justice of Fraisier's fearful imputations. But Schmucke was so rejoiced at the sight of the money for Topinard's family, and so happy in the thought of enriching, according to his contracted ideas, the only man who cared for Pons, that not one word of the compromise that was to terminate the suit reached his ears.

In the very midst of the reading of the deed, a clerk came into the office and said to his employer: "Monsieur, there is a man outside who wants to speak to Monsieur Schmucke."

At a gesture from Fraisier, the notary significantly shrugged his shoulders.

"Never interrupt us when engaged in signing deeds. Inquire the name of this —is it a man or a gentleman? Is it a creditor?"

The clerk disappeared; then returned and said: "He insists upon speaking to Monsieur Schmucke."

"His name?"

"His name is Topinard."

"I'll go. Don't hesitate to sign," said Gaudissard to Schmucke. "Conclude the matter. I'll go and see what he wants with us."

Gaudissard had understood Fraisier's gesture. Both of them suspected danger.

"What is it that brings *you* here?" said the manager to the supernumerary. "It would seem as if you didn't care about being treasurer? The principal qualification for a treasurer is—discretion."

"Monsieur!"

"Go and attend to your own business. You will never be anything if you meddle with that of others."

"Monsieur, I will not eat bread every mouthful of which would stick in my throat. Monsieur Schmucke!" shouted he. At the sound of Topinard's voice, Schmucke, who had signed the deed, came out with his money in his hand. "Dis is for de little German girl and you," said he.

"Oh! my dear Monsieur Schmucke, you have been enriching a pack of monsters—a set of people who would rob you of your good name. See, I took *that* to a worthy man—a solicitor who knows this Fraisier—and he says that it is your duty to punish so much wickedness by defending the action, and that they will give way. Read."

And so saying, this imprudent friend gave Schmucke the summons which had been sent to him at Bordin Town. Schmucke took the paper, read it, and seeing how he was therein treated, and being an entire stranger to the amenities of legal procedure, received a mortal blow. This *pebble* stopped the action of his heart, and he fell exhausted into the arms of Topinard.

At the time when this happened the pair were standing under the notary's entrance gateway; so Topinard hailed a passing hackney-carriage and placed the poor German in it. Schmucke was suffering the pangs attendant on a serious congestion of the brain; everything swam before his sight, but he had still strength to hold out the money to Topinard.

Schmucke did not immediately succumb to this first attack; but he never recovered his reason; all his movements were purely automatic; he ceased to eat, and, at the end of ten days, died without a murmur, for he could not speak. He was nursed by Madame Topinard and buried obscurely at Topinard's expense. Topinard was the only person who followed the body of this child of Germany to its last resting-place.

Fraisier, who has been made a *juge de paix,* and is on the most intimate terms with the family of Monsieur de Marville, stands high in the esteem of Madame la Presidente. She does not wish him to marry Tabareau's daughter, and promises to find a far better match for the able man to whom she is beholden, not for the acquisition of the pasture-land at Marville and the cottage only, but also for the election of Monsieur de Marville, who was returned to the chamber of deputies at the general election in 1846.

Every one will no doubt be anxious to learn what became of the heroine of this history—a history the details of which are, alas, too true; and which proves that the chief of all social forces is *character.* That heroine is, as you, oh, ye amateurs, connoisseurs, and dealers, will at once perceive, the Pons collection. In order to learn its fate, all we need do is to listen to a conversation which was held a few days since at the house of Count Popinot, when he was exhibiting his magnificent collection to some foreigners.

"Monsieur le Comte," said a distinguished foreigner, "you are the owner of treasures."

"Oh, my lord," said Count Popinot, modestly, "so far as regards pictures, no one (I will not say in Paris, but) in Europe, can lay to his soul the flattering unction that he can compete with a certain obscure individual, a Jew named Elie Magus, an aged maniac, the prince of picture-maniacs. He has collected more than a hundred pictures such as to discourage amateurs from attempting to form collections. France ought really to sacrifice seven or eight millions of francs, and purchase this gallery when the rich old fellow dies. But as regards curiosities, my collection will bear talking about—"

"But how can a man so busy as you are, and whose original fortune was so honorably acquired in trade—"

"In the drug trade," interposed Popinot. "How can such a man, you would say, continue to dabble in—drugs?"

"Nay," replied the foreigner. "But, how do you find time to look for these things? Curiosities don't walk into your house."

"My father-in-law had the nucleus of a collection before my marriage," said the Viscountess Popinot. "He loved the Arts, and was fond of masterpieces, but the principal part of his treasures came through me!"

"Through you, madame? Is it possible that one so young should have been infected with these vices?"

The Russians are so imitative that all the evils of civilization find an echo with them. Bric-à-bracomania is quite the rage

at St. Petersburg; and in consequence of the intrepidity which is natural to Russians, they have caused so great a rise in the *article* (as Remonencq would say) that collections will become impossible. This particular Russian prince had come to Paris simply and solely with a view to forming a collection.

"Prince," said the Viscountess Popinot, "this treasure came to me through the death of a cousin, who was very fond of me, and had spent upward of forty years (reckoning from 1805) in picking up in every land under the sun (and especially in Italy) all these masterpieces."

"What was his name?" inquired the nobleman.

"Pons," replied President Camusot.

"He was a charming man," said Madame Camusot in her dulcet falsetto; "a man of the greatest talent and originality, combined with much kindness of heart. This fan, which you admire, my lord, and which once belonged to Madame de Pompadour, was placed in my hands one fine morning by Monsieur Pons, who accompanied the gift with a charming little phrase, which you will pardon me for not repeating."

As Madame de Marville uttered these words, she looked at her daughter.

"Tell us what the little phrase was, Madame la Vicomtesse," said the Russian prince.

"The little phrase is worthy of the fan," replied the viscountess (whose "little phrase" was stereotyped). "He said to my mother that it was high time that that which had been in the hands of Vice should be placed in the hands of Virtue."

The nobleman looked at Madame Camusot de Marville with an air of doubt that was extremely flattering to so lean a lady.

"Monsieur Pons was so attached to us that he dined with us three or four times a week," resumed Madame Camusot; "we knew how to appreciate him, and artists enjoy the society of those who can appreciate their humor. My husband, moreover, was his only kinsman; and when this fortune came to Monsieur de Marville, who in no way expected it, Monsieur Popinot chose to buy the whole collection rather than allow it to be sold by auction; while we, for our part, preferred disposing of it in that way, for it would be so extremely painful to witness the dispersion of those beautiful things which afforded so much amusement to our dear cousin. Elie Magus acted as valuer on that occasion, and thus it was, my lord, that I was enabled to become the owner of the cottage built by your uncle, and in which we hope that you will do us the pleasure of being our guest."

A year has elapsed since Gaudissard transferred to other hands the license of the theater over which he presided, but M. Topinard is still its treasurer. Monsieur Topinard, however, has grown morose, misanthropical, and taciturn; he is supposed to have committed some crime; while the ill-natured wags of the theater maintain that his chagrin arises from his having married Lolotte. The very name of Fraisier makes the worthy Topinard start. It may perhaps be considered singular that the only heart worthy of Pons's should be found among the humblest employés of a boulevard theater.

The prediction of Madame Fontaine made so forcible an impression upon Madame Remonencq that she is unwilling to retire into the country and remains in her magnificent shop on the Boulevard de la Madeleine. She is once more a widow. As a matter of fact, the Auvergnat, having taken the precaution to have the marriage contract so drawn up that all the property should go to the survivor, placed a liqueur glass of vitriol within his wife's reach, in the expectation that she would make a mistake. She, however, having, with the very best intentions in the world, changed the position of the glass, it was Romonencq himself who swallowed its contents. This end—a fitting end for such a miscreant—is an argument in favor of the existence of Providence—that Providence which (on account perhaps of its too frequent introduction into dramatic catastrophes) painters of life are accused of forgetting.

Excuse the errors of the transcriber!

III.

WHY THE ATHEIST PRAYED.

DOCTOR BIANCHON, a physician to whom science is indebted for a grand physiological theory, and who, though still a young man, is considered one of the celebrities of the School of Paris (itself a center of light to which all the physicians of Europe pay homage), had practiced surgery for a long time before he devoted himself to medicine. His early studies were directed by one of the greatest of French surgeons, a man who passed through the scientific world like a meteor —the celebrated Despleins. As his enemies themselves acknowledge, an intransmittable method was buried in his tomb. Like all men of genius he had no heirs; he carried—and he carried away everything with him.

The fame of a surgeon is like the fame of an actor; it exists only as long as they live, and their talent is no longer appreciable after they have disappeared. Actors and surgeons, like great singers also, and those masters who increase the power of music tenfold by their execution, are all heroes of the moment. Despleins himself is a proof of this similarity between the destinies of these transitory geniuses; his name, yesterday so celebrated, is today almost forgotten; it will last only in his special sphere, and will not pass beyond it. But are not unheard-of circumstances required for the name of a *savant* to pass beyond the domain of his science into the general history of humanity? Had Despleins that universality of knowledge which makes a man the *Word*, the *Expression* of an age?

Despleins possessed a divine glance; he penetrated into the patient and his disease by a natural or acquired tuition which enabled him to seize the diagnostics peculiar to the individual, and taking into consideration the atmospheric conditions and the peculiarities of the temperament, to determine the precise time, the hour, the minute for an operation to take place. In order thus to proceed in concert with nature, had he studied the incessant juncture between beings and elementary substances contained in the atmosphere or furnished by the earth for their absorption and preparation by man, in order that he may draw from them a peculiar expression? Did he proceed by that deductive and analogical power to which the genius of Cuvier is due?—However that may be, he made himself the confidant of the flesh, by relying on the present he comprehended it in the past and the future. But did he sum up all science in his own person as Hippocrates, Galen, and Aristotle did? Has he led a whole school to new worlds? No. If it is impossible to deny that this perpetual observer of human chemistry possessed the ancient science of magism—that is to say, the knowledge of the elements in fusion, of the causes of life, of life before life, of what from its preparations it will be before it is, still it is but just to admit that everything in him was personal; he was isolated in his life by egoism, and today his egoism is the suicide of his fame. Upon his tomb rises no sonorous statue proclaiming to the future the mysteries which genius seeks at its expense. But perhaps the talent of Despleins was part and parcel of his belief, and consequently mortal. To him the terrestrial atmosphere was a generative bag; he could see the earth like an egg in its shell, and not being able to decide whether the egg or the fowl came first, he admitted neither

the shell nor the egg. He believed neither in the animal anterior nor in the spirit posterior to man.

Desplein was not in doubt, he affirmed. In his frank, unmixed atheism he was like so many *savants*, the best men in the world, but invincible atheists, such atheists as religious men will not acknowledge can exist. This opinion could not be otherwise in a man accustomed from early youth to dissect the being *par excellence* before, during, and after his life, to search him through all his organization, without finding that single soul which is so necessary to religious theories. Recognizing in man a cerebral center, a nervous center, and an aërosanguineous center, the two former supplying each other's places so well that he was convinced during the last two or three days of his life that the sense of hearing was not absolutely necessary for hearing, nor the sense of sight absolutely necessary for seeing, and that the solar plexus could replace them beyond suspicion of any change; Despleins, I say, finding two souls in man, confirmed his atheism by this fact, although it still proves nothing on the subject of God. This man, it is said, died in the final impenitence of, unhappily, so many fine geniuses; may God forgive them!

The life of this really great man betrayed many pettinesses, to use the phrase of enemies anxious to diminish his reputation, but which it would be more correct to call apparent contradictions. Never having had any cognizance of the motives on which men of higher intellect act, the envious or stupid immediately seize upon some superficial contradictions in order to draw up an indictment on which they obtain a momentary verdict. If, later on, success crowns the combinations they have attacked, by demonstrating the relation of the preparations to the results, still a few of their advance guard of calumnies always survive.

Thus, in our own time, Napoleon was condemned by his contemporaries when he stretched out the wings of his eagle over England; 1822 was necessary to explain 1804 and the flat bottom boats at Boulogne.

In the case of Despleins, his reputation and scientific knowledge being unassailable, his enemies found ground for attack in his extraordinary temper and his moral character; as a matter of fact he certainly did possess that quality which the English call "eccentricity." At times he dressed superbly, like Crebillon, the tragic writer, then all at once he would affect a strange indifference in the matter of clothes: sometimes he appeared in a carriage, sometimes on foot. He was by turns brusk and kind, though apparently hard and stingy; yet he was capable of offering his fortune to his masters when they were in exile, and they actually did him the honor of accepting it for a few days. No man has been the object of more contradictory judgments. Although, for the sake of a *cordon noir*, which physicians have no business to solicit, he was capable of dropping a book of Hours out of his pocket at court, it is certain that, inwardly, he laughed at the whole thing. He had a profound contempt for mankind, for he had studied them from above and below; he had caught them with their true expressions in the midst of the most serious and of the pettiest actions of life.

The qualities of a great man are often consolidate. If among these giants one has more talent than *esprit*, still his *esprit* has a wider range than that of a man whom one simply calls "a man of *esprit*." All genius presupposes intuition; this intuition may be directed to some special subject; but a man who can see a flower must be able to see the sun. The doctor who is asked by a courtier whose life he has saved, "How is the emperor?" and answers, "The courtier is recovering, the man will follow!" is not only a surgeon or a physician, he is also prodigiously *spirituel*. Thus the close and patient observer of humanity will justify the exorbitant pretensions of Despleins, and will believe him—as he believed himself—to have been as capable of making quite as great a minister as he was a surgeon.

Of all the pupils that Despleins had at his hospital, Horace Bianchon was one of

those to whom he was most warmly attached. Before going into residence at the Hotel Dieu, Horace Bianchon was a student of medicine, and lodged in the Latin Quarter at a wretched *pension*, known under the name of La Maison Vauquer. At this place the poor youth experienced the pangs of that acute poverty which acts as a sort of cresset from which young men of great talent should come forth refined and incorruptible, like diamonds that can be subjected to any shock without breaking. In the violent flames of passions, just freed from restraint, they acquire habits of the most unswerving probity, and accustom themselves by means of the constant labor wherewith they have baffled and confined their appetites to those struggles which await on genius. Horace was a straightforward young man, incapable of double-dealing in a question of honor, going straight to the point without palavering, and as ready to pawn his cloak for a friend as to give him his working time or his evenings. He was one of those friends who do not trouble themselves about what they receive in exchange for what they give, being certain of receiving in their turn more than they have given. Most of his friends had that inward respect for him which unobtrusive goodness inspires, and many of them were afraid of his censure.

But Horace displayed his good qualities without priggishness. He was neither a Puritan nor a preacher; he swore with a will when he gave advice, and was quite ready to take good cheer if the occasion offered. He was good company, not more prudish than a trooper, open and straightforward — not like a sailor — a sailor nowadays is a wily diplomatist—but like a fine young man who has nothing in his life to hide, he held his head high, and walked on with a light heart. In fact, to sum up everything in a word, Horace was the Pylades of more than one Orestes – creditors serving nowadays as the nearest representation of the ancient Furies. He wore his poverty with that gayety which is perhaps one of the greatest elements of courage, and, like all those who have nothing, he contracted few debts. As sober as a camel, and as watchful as a stag, his ideas and his conduct were equally unwavering.

The happiness of Bianchon's life began on the day on which the famous surgeon received a proof of the faults and good qualities which, the one as much as the other, made Doctor Horace Bianchon doubly precious to his friends. When the chief clinical lecturer takes a young man under his wing, that young man has, as they say, his foot in the stirrup.

Desplеins did not fail to take Bianchon with him as his assistant to wealthy houses, where some present almost always found its way into the pupil's purse, and where the mysteries of Parisian life were insensibly revealed to his provincial experience. He kept him in his study during consultations, and gave him employment there. Sometimes he would send him to accompany a rich patient to the baths. In fact, he nursed a practice for him. Consequently, at the end of a certain time, the despot of surgery had a *seid*. These two men, one at the height of his celebrity and at the head of his own science, enjoying an immense fortune and an immense reputation ; the other, a humble Omega, without either fortune or fame—became intimates. The great Desplеins told his assistant everything. He knew if such and such a woman had sat on a chair by the master, or on the famous couch which stood in the study, and on which he slept. He knew thoroughly the great man's temperament—half lion, half bull—which at last developed and amplified his bust to such a degree as to cause his death by enlargement of the heart. He studied the strange corners of that busy life, the projects of its sordid avarice, the hopes of the politician hidden beneath the *savant ;* he could foresee the deceptions which awaited the one sentiment buried in a heart not so much bronzen as bronzed.

One day Bianchon told Desplеins that a poor water-carrier of le quartier Saint Jacques had a terrible illness caused by fatigue and poverty ; the poor Auvergnat had eaten nothing but potatoes during

the great winter of 1821. Desplein left all his patients; he flew, at the risk of breaking his horse's wind, followed by Bianchon, to the poor man's, and himself had him carried into the private hospital founded by the celebrated Dubois, in le faubourg Saint Denis. He went and attended the man, and when he had cured him gave him the necessary sum to buy a horse and a water-cart. This Auvergnat was remarkable for an original trait. One of his friends fell ill, so he promptly brought him to his benefactor, saying, "I could not bear for him to go to any one else."

Despleins, crabbed as he was, grasped the water-carrier's hand, and said, "Bring them all to me." Then he got this son of Le Cantal taken in at the Hotel Dieu, and took the greatest care of him while he was there. Bianchon had already several times noticed in his chief a predilection for Auvergnats, and especially for water-carriers; but as Despleins made his duties at the Hotel Dieu a sort of point of honor, he did not see anything so very strange in it. One day as Bianchon was crossing la place Saint Sulpice, he caught sight of his master going into the church. Despleins, who at that time never went a step out of his *cabriolet,* was on foot, and slipped out of la rue du Petit Lion as if he had been into a house of doubtful reputation. Naturally seized with curiosity, the assistant, who knew his master's opinions, and was *un cabaniste en dyable* (with a *y,* which seems in Rabelais to imply a superiority in *devylrie*), slipped also into Saint Sulpice. He was not a little astonished at seeing the great Despleins—that atheist without pity for the angels; in fact, the dauntless *désireur* kneeling humbly on his knees, and where? In the chapel of the Virgin, at which he was hearing a mass. He gave for the expenses of the ceremony, he gave for the poor, as serious all the time as if he had been performing an operation.

Bianchon did not like to appear to be spying upon the first surgeon of the Hotel Dieu, so he went away. It chanced that Despleins had invited him to dinner that very day, not at his own house, but at a restaurant. At dessert Bianchon succeeded by skillful maneuvering in bringing the conversation round to the subject of the mass.

Despleins reveled in giving vent to his atheistic caprices; he poured forth a flood of Voltairian pleasantry, or—to be more exact— a horrible parody of *Le Citateur.*

"Ho! ho!" said Bianchon to himself. "What has become of my morning *dévot?*" He kept silence; he doubted whether it was his chief that he had seen at Saint Sulpice. Despleins would not have taken the trouble to lie to Bianchon; they knew each other too well; they had already exchanged thoughts on equally serious subjects, and discussed systems *de natura rerum,* probing or dissecting them with the knives and scalpel of incredulity. Three months passed; Bianchon did not follow this up, although the fact remained stamped in his memory. He determined to watch Despleins. He made a note of the day and the hour when he had caught him going into Saint Sulpice, and determined to be there the year following at the same day and hour to see if he could catch him again. If he did, the regular recurrence of his devotion would justify a scientific investigation, for it would not be becoming in so great a man to show a direct contradiction between his thought and his action.

The following year, at the day and hour named, Bianchon, who was by this time Despleins's assistant no longer, saw his friend's *cabriolet* stopping at the corner of la rue de Tournon and la rue du Petit Lion; from there Despleins crept along the walls of St. Sulpice, and again heard his mass at the altar of the Virgin. It certainly was Despleins! the chief surgeon, the atheist *in pelto,* the chance *dévot.* The plot was thickening. The famous *savant's* persistency complicated it all.

When Despleins had gone out, Bianchon went up to the sacristan who had come to unvest the chapel, and asked him whether the gentleman was a regular attendant there.

"I have been here for twenty years,"

said the sacristan, "and all that time Monsieur Despleins has come four times a year to hear this mass; he founded it himself."

"A foundation by him!" said Bianchon, as he walked away. "It's a great mystery—a thing enough of itself to make a doctor incredulous."

Some time passed by before Doctor Bianchon, although he was Despleins's friend, was in a position to talk to him of this strange incident in his life. If they met in consultation or in society, it was difficult to find that moment of confidence and solitude when one sits with one's feet on the fire-dogs and one's head resting on the back of an armchair, when two men tell each other their secrets.

At last, seven years later, after the Revolution of 1830, when the people rushed upon the archbishop's palace, when Republican inspiration drove them to destroy the gilded crosses that flashed up like lightning in this immense ocean of houses, when disbelief side by side with sedition stalked the streets, Bianchon caught Despleins again going into Saint Sulpice. The doctor followed, and took a place near his friend without making him the least sign or showing the least surprise. They heard the votive mass together.

"Tell me, *mon cher*," said Bianchon to Despleins, when they were outside the church, "what is the reason for this *capucinade* of yours? I have now caught you three times going to mass—*you!* You must give me a reason for this mysterious proceeding, and explain the flagrant inconsistency between your opinions and your practice. You don't believe in God, and yet you go to mass! My dear master, you are really bound to answer me."

"I am like many *dévots*, men profoundly religious in appearance, but quite as much atheists as we are, you and I."

Then came a torrent of epigrams on certain political personages, the best known of whom represent in this century a second edition of Molière's "Tartuffe."

"I did not ask for all that," said Bianchon. "I want to know the reason for what you have just been doing here; why did you found this mass?"

"*Ma fois, mon cher ami,*" said Despleins. "I am on the brink of the grave, so it is as well that I should speak to you of the beginning of my life."

At this moment Bianchon and the great man happened to be in la rue des Quatre-Vents, one of the most horrible streets in Paris. Despleins pointed to the sixth story of one of those houses like an obelisk, with a side door opening into an alley, at the end of which is a tortuous staircase lit by inside lights—well named, *jours de souffrance*. It was a greenish-colored house; on the basement lived a furniture dealer, who seemed to lodge a different misery on each of his floors. Despleins raised his arm with an emphatic gesture and said to Bianchon: "I lived up there for two years!"

"I know it; D'Arthez lived there. I used to come here almost every day when I was a youth; we used to call it '*Le bocal aux grands hommes.*' Well?"

"The mass that I have just heard is connected with events which took place at the time when I lived in the garret in which you tell me D'Arthez used to live: the one with the window where the line with the clothes on it is floating over the pot of flowers. I had such a rough start, my dear Bianchon, that I can dispute the palm of the sufferings of Paris with any one. I have endured everything: hunger, thirst, want of money, of clothes, of boots and shoes, and of linen—all the hardest phases of poverty. I have blown on my numbed fingers in that '*bocal aux grands hommes*'—I should like to go with you and see it again. I worked through one winter when I could see my head steaming and a cloud of my own breath rising like you see the breath of horses on a frosty day. I do not know where a man gets his support from to enable him to offer any resistance to such a life. I was alone, without help, without a sou either to buy books or to pay the expenses of my medical education. Not having a friend, my irritable, gloomy, restless temperament stood in my way. No one was willing to see in my irritability the labors and

difficulties of a man who, from the bottom of the social state where he is, is toiling to reach the surface. But—I can say this to *you;* before you I have no need of disguise—I had that foundation of noble sentiments and vivid sensibility, which will always be the appanage of men who are strong enough to climb to any summit whatever, after having trudged for a long time through the sloughs of poverty. I could get nothing from my family, nor my home, beyond the meager allowance they made me. At this time then, all I had to eat in the morning was a little loaf which the baker in la rue du Petit Lion sold me cheaper, because it had been baked the evening before, or the evening before that. This I crumbled into some milk; so my morning meal only cost me two sous. I only dined every other day, at a *pension* where the dinner cost sixteen sous. In this way I only spent nine sous a day. You know as well as I do what care I had to take of my clothes, and my boots and shoes! I don't know whether we feel later as much trouble over the treason of a comrade as we feel—you have felt it too—at the sight of the mocking grin of a shoe that is coming unsewed, or at the sound of a split in the lining of an overcoat. I drank nothing but water. I had the greatest respect for the *cafés*. Zoppi seemed to me a sort of Promised Land where the Luculli of the *pays latin* alone had rights of presence. Should I ever be able, I said to myself sometimes, to take a cup of coffee and cream there, and play a game of dominoes? Well, I carried into my work the fever with which my poverty inspired me. I tried to acquire positive details of knowledge, that I might possess an immense personal value, and so deserve the place I was to reach on the day when I passed out of my state of nothingness. I consumed more oil than bread; the light that lit me during those stubborn nights cost me more than my food. The struggle was long, obstinate, and without any consolation. I awoke no sympathy about me. In order to make friends, a young man must mix with his fellows, possess a few sous to be able to go and drink with them, and go with them everywhere where students do go! I had nothing! and no one in Paris realizes what a nothing 'nothing' is. If ever there was an occasion which might betray my poverty, I experienced that nervous contraction of the gullet which makes a patient believe that a ball is rising up into the larynx out of the œsophagus. Later on I met those people who were born rich, who have never wanted for anything, and do not know the problem of this rule of three: *'A young man is to crime as a hundred sou piece is to x.'* These gilded idiots say to me: 'Then why did you get into debt? Why did you contract such onerous obligations?' They remind me of the princess who, knowing that the people were starving for bread, said: 'Why don't they buy *brioches?*' I should very much like to see one of these rich people, who complain that I charge them too much for operating—yes, I should like to see him alone in Paris without a sou or a scrap of baggage, without a friend and without credit, forced to work with his five fingers to live. What would he do? Where would he go to stay his hunger? Bianchon, if you have seen me sometimes hard and bitter, it was that I was laying my former troubles upon the callousness and egoism of which I have had thousands of proofs in high quarters; or I may have been thinking of the obstacles that hate and envy and jealousy and calumny have raised between me and success. At Paris, as soon as certain people see you ready to put your foot in the stirrup, some of them catch you by your coat-tail; others loose the buckle of the girth so that you may fall and break your head; another takes the shoes off your horse; another steals your whip; the least treacherous is the one you can see coming up to shoot you, with the muzzle of his pistol close to you. You have enough talent, *mon cher enfant,* to know very soon the horrible, incessant warfare that mediocrity wages against a man of greater power. If you lose twenty-five louis one evening, the next morning you will be accused of being a gambler, and your best

friends will say that the night before you lost twenty-five thousand francs. If your head is bad, you will pass for a lunatic. If you feel irritable, you will be unbearable. If, in order to resist this army of pigmies, you collect your superior forces, your best friends will cry out that you want to eat up everything, that you think you have a right to domineer and play the tyrant. In short, your good qualities will become faults, your faults will become vices, and your vices will be crimes. If you have saved a man, you will have killed him; if your patient recovers, it will be certain that you have assured the present at the expense of the future; if he is not dead, he will die. Stumble, and you will have fallen. Invent whatever you will, claim your just rights, you will be a sharp man, a man difficult to deal with, a man who won't let young men get on. So you see, *mon cher*, if I do not believe in God, much less do I believe in man. You recognize in me, don't you? an entirely different Despleins from the Despleins whom every one abuses. But don't let us stir up the mud!

"Well, I lived in that house; I was hard at work so as to be able to pass my first examination; I hadn't got a stiver. I had come to one of those last extremities when, you know, a man says, 'I must enlist.' I had one hope. I was expecting a trunk full of linen from my home—a present from one of those old aunts who, knowing nothing about Paris, think of one's shirts, under the idea that with thirty francs a month their nephew lives on ortolans. The trunk arrived while I was at the school; the carriage cost forty francs. The porter, a German shoemaker, who lodged in a loft, had paid the money and kept the trunk. I went for a walk in la rue des Fosses Saint Germain des Pres, and in la rue de l'Ecole de Medicine, but I could not invent a stratagem which would deliver me up my trunk, without my being obliged to give the forty francs, which I should naturally have paid after having sold the linen. My stupidity in this taught me that I had no other vocation than surgery. Delicate minds which exercise their power in a lofty sphere are wanting in that spirit of intrigue which is so fertile in resource and combination; *their* talent is chance; they do not seek—they *find*. Well, at night I returned. My neighbor, a water-carrier, named Bourgeat, a man from Saint Flour, was going in at the same moment. We knew each other in the way that two lodgers get to know each other who have rooms on the same landing and hear each other sleeping, coughing, and dressing, until at last they get used to one another. My neighbor informed me that the landlord, whom I owed for three terms, had turned me out; I had to pack off on the following day. He himself had notice to quit on account of his trade. The night I spent was the most miserable in my life. Where was I to get a messenger to carry my few belongings and my books? How was I to pay a messenger and the carter? Where was I to go? I asked myself these unanswerable questions again and again, through my tears, like madmen repeating their refrains. I fell asleep. Poverty has a divine sleep of its own, full of beautiful dreams. The next morning, while I was eating my bowl of bread crumbled into milk, Bourgeat comes in and says in his bad French—

"'*Monchieur l'Etudiant*, I'm a poor fellow, a foundling from the hospital at *Chian* Flour; I've no father or mother, and I've never been rich enough to marry. You've not a lot of people belonging to you neither; you've not got anything to speak of. Look here, I've got a hand-cart down below which I've hired for two *chous* an hour. It'll hold all our things: if you're agreeable, we'll look out for a place where we can lodge together, as we're driven out of this. After all, it's not such a paradise on earth.'

"'I know that, my good Bourgeat,' I said; 'but I am in great difficulties. Down below I have got a trunk containing linen worth a hundred *écus;* with that I should be able to pay the landlord and also what I owe the porter, but I haven't got a hundred sous.'

"'Hm! I've got some *chink*,' he answered cheerfully, showing me a filthy old

leather purse. 'You'd better keep your linen.'

"Bourgeat paid for my three terms and his own, and settled with the porter. Then he put our furniture and my linen on to his barrow and pushed it through the streets, stopping before every house where there was a placard hung out. *I* went up to see if the place to let would be likely to suit us. At midday we were still wandering about le quartier Latin without having fouud anything. The price was a great obstacle. Bourgeat proposed that we should dine at a wine shop; we left our barrow at the door.

"Toward evening I discovered in la cour de Bohan, passage du Commerce, two rooms separated by a staircase, at the top of a house, under the tiles. We could have lodgings for sixty francs a year each. Here, then, we settled down, I and my humble friend. We dined together. Bourgeat, who earned about fifty sous a day, possessed about a hundred écus. He would soon have been able to realize his ambition and buy a horse and water-cart. When he discovered my situation, for he could draw out my secrets with a depth of cunning and a kindness the memory of which even now touches my heart, he gave up for some time the ambition of his whole life. Bourgeat had worked in the streets since he was twenty-two; he sacrificed his hundred écus to my future."

Here Despleins pressed Bianchon's arm.

"He gave me the necessary money for my examinations. He understood, *mon ami*, that I had a mission—that the needs of my intelligence exceeded his own. He took charge of me; he called me his *petit;* he lent me the money necessary for my purchases of books; sometimes he would come in very quietly to watch me at work; in short, he took all the care of a mother that I might be able to have plenty of wholesome nourishment instead of the bad and insufficient food to which I had been condemned.

"Bourgeat was a man of about forty, with the face of a mediæval burgher, a prominent forehead, and a head that a painter might have taken as a model for Lycurgus. The poor man felt his heart big with dormant affection; he had never been loved except by a poodle, which had died a short time before. He was always talking to me about it, and used to ask me if I thought the Church would consent to say masses for the repose of its soul. He said his dog was a true Christian; it had accompanied him to church for twelve years without ever having barked. It listened to the organ without opening its mouth, sitting quietly by him with an air which made him believe that it was praying with him. This man centered all his affections on me; he accepted me as a being who came in trouble; he became the most attentive of mothers to me, the most delicate of benefactors, in short, the ideal of that virtue which delights in its own work. If I met him in the streets he cast on me a look of intelligence full of inconceivable nobleness. On these occasions he walked as if he were carrying nothing; it seemed to make him happy to see me in good health and well clad. In fact, his was the devotion of the people, the love of the *grisette,* carried into a higher sphere. He did my commissions, woke me at night at certain hours, cleaned my lamp, and polished our landing; he was as good a servant as he was a father, as neat as an English girl. He kept house; like Philopœmen, he sawed up our wood; doing everything in a simple way of his own without ever compromising his dignity, for he seemed to feel that the end he had in view could ennoble whatever he did. When I left this good man to enter at the Hotel Dieu as a resident, I cannot describe the sadness and gloom he felt at the thought that he could no longer live with me; but he consoled himself with the prospect of saving up the money necessary for the expenses of my thesis, and made me promise to come on the days when we had leave, to see him. He was proud of me; he loved me for my own sake, and for his own too. If you were to look up my thesis, you would see that it was dedicated to him. During the last year of my term of residence I had earned enough money to repay the noble Auvergnat all I owed him, by buy-

ing him a horse and water-cart. He was furiously angry to think that I was depriving myself of the money, and yet enchanted at seeing his wishes realized; he laughed and scolded me together, looking at the horse and water-cart, and saying, as he wiped away a tear, 'It's too bad. Oh! what a splendid cart! you ought not to have done it. . . . The horse is as strong as an Auvergnat.' I never saw anything more touching than this scene. Bourgeat absolutely insisted on buying me the case of instruments mounted in silver which you have seen in my study; to me it is the most precious thing I possess. Although elated at my first success, he never let the least word escape him or the least sign that implied: 'This man is due to me.' And yet without him poverty would have killed me. The poor man was killing himself for me; he had eaten nothing but bread rubbed with garlic, so that I might have enough coffee for my vigils. He fell ill. As you may imagine, I spent the nights at his bedside; I pulled him through the first time, but he had a relapse two years afterward, and in spite of the most devoted care, in spite of the greatest efforts of science, he had to give in. No king was ever nursed as he was. Yes, Bianchon, I tried things unheard of before to snatch that life from death. I would have made him live, as much as anything that he might witness his own work, that I might realize all his prayers for him, that I might satisfy the only feeling of gratitude that has ever filled my heart and extinguish a fire which burns me even now.

"Bourgeat," continued Despleins, who was visibly moved, after a pause, "my second father, died in my arms. He left me everything he possessed by a will he had had made by a scrivener, dated the year when we went to lodge in la cour de Rohan. He had all the faith of a charcoal burner; he loved the Blessed Virgin as he would have loved his wife. Though he was an ardent Catholic, he had never said a word to me about my irreligion. He besought me, when he was in danger, to spare no pains that he might have the assistance of the Church. I had a mass said for him every day. He would often express to me during the night fears as to his future; he was afraid that he had not lived a holy enough life. Poor man! he toiled from morning till night. To whom else could Paradise, if there is a Paradise, belong? He received the sacraments like the saint he was, and his death was worthy of his life. No one followed his funeral except me. When I had placed my only benefactor in the earth, I pondered how I could perform my obligations to him. I remembered that he had no family or friends, or wife, or children; but he believed; he had a religious conviction. Had I any right to dispute it? He had spoken to me timidly about masses said for the repose of the dead. He had not chosen to impose that duty upon me, thinking that it would be like asking for a return for his devotion. As soon as I could establish a foundation, I gave the necessary sum to Saint Sulpice for having four masses a year said there. As the only thing I could offer Bourgeat in satisfaction of his pious wishes, I go in his name, on the day on which this mass is said at the beginning of every season, and recite for him the necessary prayers. I say with the good faith of a doubter: 'My God, if there is a sphere where Thou puttest after their death those who have been perfect, think of good Bourgeat; and if there is anything for him to suffer, give me his sufferings that he may enter more quickly into what is called Paradise.' That, mon cher, is all that a man of my opinions can allow himself. God cannot be annoyed with me. I swear to you, I would give my fortune for the belief of Bourgeat to enter into my brain."

Bianchon, who attended Desplelns in his last illness, dares not affirm now that the celebrated surgeon died an atheist. Those who believe will like to think that the humble Auvergnat will have come to open to him the door of heaven, as he formerly opened to him the door of that earthly temple over which is written, *Aux grands hommes la patrieréconnaissante.*

IV.

MYSTERY OF LA GRANDE BRETECHE.

On the banks of the Loire, about a stone's throw from Vendôme, stands an old brown house, with a very steep roof. Even the stinking tan-yards and the wretched taverns found on the outskirts of almost all small towns have no place here; the isolation is complete. At the back of this dwelling, leading down to the bank of the river, is a garden. The box, once clipped to mark the walks, grows now as it will; some willows sprung from the Loire have formed a boundary with their rapid growth, and almost hide the house; plants which we call weeds make the sloping bank beautiful with their luxuriant growth; the fruit trees, unpruned for ten years, form a thicket with their suckers, and yield no harvest; the espaliers have grown as bushy as a hedge of elms; paths once sanded are covered with purslain — or rather, of the paths themselves there is left no trace. From the brow of the hill hang, as it were, the ruins of the ancient castle of the Dukes of Vendôme; it is the only place whence the eye can penetrate into this retreat.

It is said that this strip of land was once—at a date difficult to fix exactly—the delight of a gentleman who spent his time in the cultivation of roses and tulips; in fact, in horticulture generally, especially devoting himself to the rarer fruits. An arbor—or rather, the ruins of one—is still visible, and in it a table which time has not yet entirely destroyed. The sight of this garden which is no more, reminds one of the negative enjoyment of life spent peacefully in the country, just as one guesses at the story of a successful merchant from the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the sad and sweet thoughts which fasten here upon the soul, one of the walls bears a sun-dial inscribed with this legend, "Ultimam cogita"—such is the reminder of its somewhat matter-of-fact Christianity. The roofs of this house are utterly ruinous, the shutters are always closed, the balconies full of swallows' nests, the doors forever shut; tall grasses etch with their green outline the cracks in the pavement, the bolts are red with rust. Summer and winter the sun and the moon and the snow have cracked the wood and shrunk the planks and gnawed away the paint. Here silence and gloom hold their untroubled sway, only birds, and cats, and rats, and mice, and martens roam here unmolested, and fight their battles, and prey upon each other. Over all an invisible hand has written the one word—*Mystery*.

If you were driven by your curiosity to go round and look at the house on the other side, from the road, you would notice a wide-arched door, through which the children of the neighborhood have made plenty of peep-holes—I learned afterward that this door had been past repair ten years before—and through these irregular chinks you could see the perfect harmony there is between the garden front and the front looking on to the courtyard. Here is the same reign of disorder—the flagstones are edged with tufts of grass, enormous cracks run like furrows over the walls, the blackened coping is interlaced with festoons of countless wall plants, the stones of the steps are unjointed, the gutters are broken, the cord of the bell has rotted away. Has fire from heaven passed through this dwelling? Did some tribunal decree that this habitation should be sown with salt?

Has man betrayed France in this place—insulted God? These are the questions one asks here; only the reptiles writhe and answer not. This empty, desolate house is a vast enigma, and no man knows the clew. It was formerly a small manor, and bears the name of La Grande Bréteche.

During my stay at Vendôme, where Despleins had left me to take care of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling became one of my keenest pleasures. It was more than a ruin; to a ruin are attached at least some remembrances of incontestable authenticity; but this habitation still standing, slowly decaying beneath an avenging hand, held within it a secret—a thought unknown. At the least its mere existence was the sign of some strange caprice. Many a time of an evening I resolutely approached the now wild hedge-row which protected the inclosure. I braved the tearing thorns, and trod this garden without an owner, and entered this possession no longer public or private. I stayed there whole hours gazing upon its disorder. Not even for the sake of learning the story—which I felt certain would give an explanation of this strange scene—would I have made a single inquiry of any of the gossips of Vendôme. There I composed charming romances; I gave myself up to little debauches of melancholy which delighted my heart.

If I had known the cause of this desertion (perhaps a commonplace story enough), I should have lost the intoxication of these my unpublished poems. To me this retreat represented the most varied pictures of human life clouded by misery. Now it had the air of a cloister without inmates; now the peace of a cemetery without the dead and all their chattering epitaphs; one day it was a lazar-house, the next the palace of the Atridae; but above all it was the country with its hour-glass existence and its conventional ideas. I have often wept, I never laughed there. More than once I felt an involuntary terror when I heard above my head the dull whir of the wings of some belated wood-dove. There the soil is so dank you must defy the lizards and vipers and frogs that walk abroad in all the wild liberty of Nature. Above all, you must not mind the cold; at certain moments you feel as though a mantle of ice were cast upon your shoulders, like the commandant's hand upon Don Juan's neck.

One evening, just at the moment I was finishing a tragedy by which I was explaining to myself the phenomenon of this sort of woe in effigy, the wind turned an old rusty weathercock, and the cry it gave forth sounded like a groan bursting from the depth of the house; I shivered with terror.

I returned to my inn overpowered with gloomy thoughts. When I had supped, my hostess came with a mysterious air into my room and said, "Monsieur, Monsieur Regnault is here." "Who is Monsieur Regnault?" "Why! does not monsieur know Monsieur Regnault? Ah, that's very odd," she said, and went away. Suddenly I saw before me a long lean man; he entered the room like a ram gathering itself up to butt at a rival; he presented a receding forehead, a little pointed head, and a sallow face, not unlike a glass of dirty water; he might have passed for a ministerial beadle. This man, who was quite unknown to me, wore a black coat, very much worn at the seams, but he had a diamond in the bosom of his shirt and gold rings in his ears.

"Monsieur, whom have I the honor of addressing?" said I.

He seated himself upon a chair, arranged himself before my fire, placed his hat on my table, rubbed his hands together and said, "Ah! it's very cold. Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault." I bowed, saying to myself, "Il bondo cani! let's see."

"I am," said he, "a notary in Vendôme."

"I am charmed to hear it, monsieur," said I, "but I am not in a position to make a will, for reasons known to myself."

"Just one moment!" he replied, raising his hand as if to impose silence.

"Allow me, monsieur, allow me! I learn that you have occasionally gone to walk in the garden of La Grande Bréteche."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Just one moment!" said he, repeating his gesture; "this of itself constitutes an actionable offense. Monsieur, I am come in the name and as executor under the will of madame, the late Comtesse de Merret, to request you to discontinue your visits. Just one moment! I am no Turk; I do not wish to make a crime of it; besides, you may very well be ignorant of the circumstances which oblige me to allow the finest mansion in Vendôme to fall into ruins. However, monsieur, you appear to be a man of education, and you ought to know that the laws forbid trespass on an inclosed estate under heavy penalties. A hedge is as good as a wall. However, the state in which the house now stands may serve as an excuse for your curiosity. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to leave you free to come and go as you please in the house; but, charged as I am to carry out the wishes of the testatrix, I have the honor, monsieur, to request you not to enter that garden again. Monsieur, since the opening of the will I have not myself set foot in that house, though it belongs—as I had the honor of informing you—to the estate of Madame de Merret. All we did was to make an inventory of the doors and windows, in order to assess the taxes, which I pay annually out of capital destined by the late Madame la Comtesse for that purpose. Ah, my dear monsieur, her will made a great talk in Vendôme!"

Here the worthy man stopped to blow his nose. I respected his loquacity, understanding perfectly that the estate of Madame de Merret was the most important event in his life—his whole reputation, his glory, his *restoration*. Then, after all, I must say good-by to my fine reveries and romances. However, I did not rebel against the satisfaction of learning the truth in an official manner.

"Monsieur," I said, "would it be indiscreet if I asked you the reason for this eccentricity?"

At these words a look expressing all the pleasure of a man accustomed to mounting his hobby, passed over the notary's face. He pulled up his shirt collar with a sort of self-satisfied air, took out his snuff-box, opened it, offered me some snuff, and on my refusal seized a large pinch himself. He was happy!

The man who has not got a hobby knows nothing of the profit one can get out of life. A hobby is the exact mean between passion and monomania.

At this moment I understood that charming expression of Sterne's in all its meaning. I had a complete idea of the joy with which, by the aid of Trim, Uncle Toby bestrode his charger.

"Monsieur," said Monsieur Regnault, "I was formerly senior clerk to Maître Roguin, in Paris — an excellent office. Perhaps you have heard speak of it? No! Well, a most unfortunate bankruptcy rendered it notorious. Not having sufficient capital to carry on business in Paris, considering the price to which practices went up in 1816, I came here and purchased the office of my predecessor. I had relations here in Vendôme, among others a very rich aunt who gave me her daughter in marriage. Monsieur," he continued after a slight pause, "three months after I had been enrolled before *Monseigneur le Garde des sceaux*, I was summoned one night just as I was going to bed (this was before my marriage) by Madame la Comtesse de Merret to her *château*, le Château de Merret. Her lady's-maid, a fine young woman, now servant in this hotel, was at my door in Madame la Comtesse's *calèche*. Ah! just one moment! I ought to have told you, monsieur, that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to Paris, and died there two months before I came here. He died miserably. The day of his departure Madame la Comtesse had left La Grande Bréteche and had it dismantled. Some people even declare that she burned all the furniture, hangings—*in short all the goods and chattels generally whatsoever adorning the premises now in the tenancy of the said sieur*—(Dear me, what am I saying? Beg pardon, I was think-

ing I was drawing up a lease.) Yes," he repeated, "they say she had them burned in the meadow at Merret. Have you been to Merret, monsieur? No," said he, answering the question himself. "Ah! it's a very fine place! For about three months before, Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse had been living in a strange manner. They no longer received any one; madame lived on the ground-floor and monsieur on the first story. After Madame la Comtesse was left alone she never showed herself again, except at church; later she refused to see her friends who came to visit her at home in her *château*. She was already very much changed when she left La Grande Bretèche and went to live at Merret. The dear woman (I say 'dear' because this diamond comes to me from her, otherwise I never saw her but once). Well, the good lady was very ill. No doubt she had given up all hope of recovery, for she died without wishing any doctors to be called in; indeed, many of our ladies here thought that she was not quite right in the head. As you may imagine then, monsieur, my curiosity was especially excited when I was informed that Madame de Merret needed my assistance—and I was not the only person who took interest in this story.

"Although it was late, the whole town knew that same evening that I had gone to Merret. On the road I addressed a few questions to the lady's-maid, but her answers were very vague; however, she told me that the curé of Merret had come during the day and administered the Last Sacraments to her mistress, and that it seemed impossible that she could live through the night. I arrived at the *chateau* about eleven o'clock. I went up the great staircase, then, after traversing vast, gloomy apartments, cold and damp enough for the devil, I reached the principal bed-chamber, where Madame la Comtesse lay. After all the reports that had been going about (I should never have finished, monsieur, if I were to repeat all the stories that are told about her), I expected to see a sort of coquette. Just fancy, I had the greatest difficulty to discover at all where she was, in the great bed in which she lay. True, she had one of those antique Argant lamps for light, but the chamber was enormous, with an *ancien régime frise* so covered with dust that the very sight of it made one cough. Ah! but you've not been to Merret! Well! monsieur, the bed is one of those old-fashioned ones, with a high canopy trimmed with figured chintz. A small night table stood by the bedside, and I noticed on it a 'Following of Christ,' which, by the way, I afterward bought for my wife, as well as the lamp; there was also a large couch for her confidential servant, and two chairs. No fire, mind! This was all the furniture; it wouldn't have filled ten lines of an inventory. Ah, *mon cher monsieur*, if you had seen, as I did then, this vast room, hung with brown, you would have fancied you had been transported into a scene of a romance come true. It was icy, more than icy—funereal," he added, raising his arm with a theatrical gesture and pausing. "After looking for some time and going close up to the bed, at last I discovered Madame de Merret, thanks again to the lamplight which fell full upon her pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax; it was just like a pair of clasped hands. She had on a lace cap which showed her beautiful hair; then, it was as white as thread. She was sitting up, though she seemed to do so with great difficulty. Her great black eyes, dulled with fever no doubt, and already almost dead, scarcely moved under the bones where the eyebrows are—here!" said he, pointing to the arch of his eyes. "Her brow was wet, her hands were fleshless, mere bones covered with a fine, tender skin; all her veins and muscles stood out prominently. She must have been very beautiful once, but at the moment I was seized with a feeling—I don't know how—at the sight of her. The people who laid her out said that they had never seen a creature so utterly fleshless alive. She really was terrible to behold! Disease had made such ravages upon her she was nothing more than a phantom. Her lips were a

livid purple; they seemed motionless even when she spoke. Although my profession takes me now and again to the bedsides of the dying in order to ascertain their last wishes, so that I am not unfamiliar with these scenes, yet I must say that the lamentations of the families and the agonies of the dying which I have witnessed are as nothing compared to this desolate and silent woman in her vast *chateau.* I could not hear the faintest sound, I could not even see the least movement of the bed-clothes from the breathing of the sick woman; I too stood perfectly motionless, absorbed in looking at her, in a sort of stupor. I could fancy I was there now. At last her great eyes moved; she tried to lift her right hand, but it fell back on the bed, and these words passed out of her mouth like a sigh—her voice was a voice no more—'I have waited very impatiently for you.' Her cheeks flushed feverishly. It was a struggle for her to speak. 'Madame,' I said. She made me a sign to be silent, and at the same moment the old housekeeper rose from her couch and whispered in my ear: 'Do not speak; Madame la Comtesse is not in a state to bear the least sound; if you spoke you might agitate her.' I sat down. After a few moments Madame de Merret gathered up all her remaining strength and moved her right arm; she put it with immense difficulty under her bolster; then she paused for a moment; then she made one last effort to draw out her hand; she took out a sealed paper, and as she did so the sweat fell in drops from her forehead. 'I intrust my will to you,' she said. 'Ah, my God, ah!' This was all. She seized a crucifix which lay on her bed, raised it quickly to her lips, and died. The expression of those motionless eyes makes me shudder still; she must have suffered terribly! There was joy in her last look, and the joy remained graven upon her dead eyes. I took away the will with me; when it was opened I found that Madame de Merret had named me her executor. She bequeathed the whole of her property to the hospital at Vendôme, with the exception of a few individual legacies. Her directions relatively to La Grande Bréteche were as follows:—She directed me to leave the house for a period of fifty years—reckoned from the day of her death—in the exact state in which it should be found at the moment of her decease; she forbade any entry into the apartments by any person whatsoever, and also the least repair; she even set aside the interest of a certain sum wherewith, if necessary, to engage keepers, in order to insure the fulfillment of her intentions in their entirety. At the expiration of this term of years, if the wishes of the testatrix have been carried out, the house is to pass to my heirs, for monsieur is aware that notaries are not allowed to accept a legacy; if they are not carried out, La Grande Bréteche returns to the heirs-at-law, with the charge that they are to fulfill the conditions indicated in the codicil annexed to the will, which codicil is not to be opened until the expiration of the said fifty years. The will has never been disputed, and so—;" at this word, and without finishing his sentence, that oblong notary surveyed me with an air of triumph, and I made him quite happy by addressing him a few compliments.

"Monsieur," I finished by saying to him, "you have made such a vivid impression upon me that I fancy I can see this dying woman paler than her own sheets; her gleaming eyes make me afraid; I shall dream of her to-night. But you will have formed some conjectures concerning the dispositions contained in this eccentric will?"

"Monsieur," said he, with comic reserve, "I never allow myself to judge of the conduct of persons who have honored me with the gift of a diamond."

I soon untied the tongue of the scrupulous notary, and he communicated to me, amid long digressions, all the observations made by the profound politicians of both sexes whose judgments are law in Vendôme. But these observations were so contradictory and so diffuse, that, in spite of the interest which I took in this authentic history, I very nearly fell asleep. The notary, no doubt accustomed

to listen himself, and to make his clients and fellow-townsmen listen too, to his dull voice and monotonous intonation, began to triumph over my curiosity, when happily he got up to leave.

"Ha, ha, monsieur," said he, upon the staircase, "there are many people who would like to be alive in forty-five years' time, but—just one moment!" and he put the first finger of his right hand to his nose, as if to say, "Pay great attention to this," and said in a sly way, "To get as far as that, one must start before sixty."

I was drawn from my apathy by the last sally—the notary thought it prodigiously witty; then I shut my door, sat down in my armchair, and put my feet on the fire-dogs of the grate.

I was soon deep in a romance *à la* Anne Radcliffe, founded on the juridical hints given by Monsieur Regnault. Presently my door, handled by the dexterous hand of a woman, turned on its hinges; my hostess came in, a good-humored, jovial woman, who had missed her vocation; she was a Fleming, and ought to have been born in a picture by Teniers.

"Well, monsieur," said she. "I suppose Monsieur Regnault has been droning over his old story again about La Grande Brétèche?"

"Yes, he has, *mére* Lepas."

"What has he been telling you?"

I repeated to her in a few words the gloomy, chilling story of Madame de Merret. After each sentence my hostess stretched out her neck and looked at me with an innkeeper's own shrewdness—a sort of happy mean between the instinct of a gendarme, the craft of a spy, and the shiftiness of a shopkeeper. When I had finished I added,

"My dear *dame* Lepas! you seem to me to know something more about it yourself, or else why should you have come up to see me?"

"No, on my word of honor! as sure as my name's Lepas."

"No, don't swear to it; your eyes are big with a secret. You knew Monsieur Merret; what was he like?"

"Lord bless you, Monsieur de Merret was a fine man; you never got to the end of him, he was so long—a worthy gentleman come from Picardie, but, as we say here, '*Il avait la tête pres du bonet.*' He paid everything ready money, so that he might never come to words with any one; you see he was a bit quick! Our ladies here all thought him very pleasant."

"Because he was clever?" said I.

"Likely enough," said she.

"You may imagine, monsieur, there must have been a something about him, as they say, for Madame de Merret to have married him. I don't want to hurt the other ladies, but she was the richest and prettiest young lady in all Vendôme; she had near on twenty thousand livres a year. The whole town went to see the wedding. The bride was a delicate, winning creature—a real jewel of a wife. Ah! they made a fine couple in their time!"

"Were they happy together?"

"Hm! perhaps they were and perhaps they weren't, as far as one could tell; but you can imagine they didn't hob-nob with such as we. Madame de Merret made a good wife, and very kind. I dare say she had a good bit to put up with at times from her husband's tantrums; but though he was a bit stern, we liked him well enough. Bah! it's his quality that made him like that; when a man's noble, you know—"

"Then there must certainly have been some catastrophe for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to have separated so abruptly?"

"I never said anything about a catastrophe, monsieur. I don't know anything about it."

"All right! Now I am certain that you *do* know about it."

"Well, monsieur, I am going to tell you all I know. When I saw Monsieur Regnault go up to see you, I felt certain that he would talk to you about Madame de Merret, with reference to La Grande Brétèche. This put it into my head to consult monsieur, for you seemed to me to be a comfortable man, who would not betray a poor woman like me that has never done harm to any one—and yet

find myself tormented by my conscience. I have never up to now dared to open my mouth about it to the people in this place; they're all a pack of gossips, with tongues like vinegar. In fact, monsieur, I have never yet had a traveler stay in my house as long as you have, or any one to whom I could tell the history of the fifty thousand francs—"

"My dear *dame* Lepas," I answered, checking the flow of her words, "if your confidence is of a nature to compromise me I wouldn't be burdened with it for all the world."

"You needn't be afraid," said she, interrupting me, "you will see."

This readiness made me think that I was not the only person to whom our good hostess had communicated the secret of which I was to be the sole depository; however, I settled myself to listen.

"Monsieur," said she, "when the emperor sent some Spanish prisoners here—prisoners of war or others—I had one to lodge at the expense of the government, a young Spaniard sent to Vendôme on parole. In spite of his parole, he had to go every day to report himself to the sub-prefect. He was a Spanish grandee—excuse me a minute—he bore a name ending in 'os' and 'dia.' I think it was Bagos de Feredia, but I wrote it down in my register; if you would like to, you can read it. Ah! he was a handsome young man for a Spaniard, who are all ugly—so they say. He couldn't have been more than five feet two or three inches, but he was well made. He had the smallest hands!—which he took such care of—you should have seen—he had as many brushes for his hands as a woman has for the whole of her toilet. He had long black hair, gleaming eyes, rather an olive complexion—but I admired that. He wore the finest linen I ever saw on any one—and I have had princesses to lodge here, and among others le Général Bertrand, le Duc and la Duchesse d'Albrantès, Monsieur Decazes, and the king of Spain. He did not eat much; but one couldn't be angry with him, he had such gentle courteous manners. Oh! I was very fond of him, although he didn't say two words in the day; and one couldn't get the least conversation with him. If one tried to talk to him, he didn't answer. It was a fad—a mania; they're all like it, so I'm told. He read his breviary like a priest; he went regularly to mass and to all the offices; and where do you think he knelt?—(we noticed this afterward)—why, not two steps from Madame de Merret's chapel. As he took his seat there ever since the first time he went into the church, no one imagined there could be anything in it; besides, the poor young man never raised his nose out of his book of prayers. Then, monsieur, in the evening he used to walk on the hill in the ruins of the castle. It was his only amusement, poor man; it must have reminded him of his own country—Spain is nothing but mountains, so I've heard. From the first days of his detention he was always late at night. I was anxious, when I saw he didn't come in until just on the stroke of midnight; but we all got accustomed to his fancies. He took the key of the door, and we didn't sit up for him any longer. He lodged in the house we have in la rue des Casernes. Then one of our stable-boys told us that one evening when he was going to wash the horses, he believed he had seen the Spanish grandee swimming like a fish some distance off in the river. When he came back I warned him to mind the weeds. He seemed annoyed at having been seen in the water. At last, monsieur, one day, or rather one morning, we found he was not in his bedroom; he had not returned. After hunting about everywhere, I saw some writing in the drawer of his table, and with it fifty of the Spanish gold pieces they call portugals, equal to about fifty thousand francs; and afterward in a little sealed box some diamonds, worth about ten thousand francs. Well, this writing said that in case he did not come back he left us the money and the diamonds, and charged us to have masses said to thank God for his escape and his safety. At that time I still had my husband with me, and he ran out to search for him. Now comes the oddest part of the story. He brought back the Span-

iard's clothes, which he had found under a large stone in a sort of palisade on the bank of the river, on the *chateau* side, almost opposite La Grande Brétèche. My husband had got there so early that no one had seen them. When he had read the letter, he burned the clothes, and we gave out according to Count Feredia's desire that he had escaped. The sub-prefect set the whole *gendarmerie* at his heels; but, pooh! they never caught him. Lepas believed the Spaniard was drowned; but I don't, monsieur. I believe he had something to do with that affair of Madame de Merret, seeing that Rosalie told me that the crucifix which her mistress was so fond of that she had it buried with her was made of ebony and silver. Now during the first days of Monsieur Feredia's stay here he had a crucifix of ebony and silver, which I never saw among his things again. Now, monsieur, you don't really think I need have any remorse about the fifty thousand francs? They really are mine?"

"Certainly.—Then you've never tried to question Rosalie," I said.

"Haven't I though, monsieur; but what am I to do? That girl! she's—*a wall.* She knows something, but there's no getting anything out of her."

After talking to me for a few minutes more my hostess left me, tortured by vague and gloomy thoughts. I felt a romantic curiosity, and yet a sort of religious horror, like the profound sensation which takes hold of us when we go into a church at night. Under the lofty arches we perceive through the gloom a far-off flickering light, an uncertain form glides by us, we hear the rustle of a gown or a cassock—before we know it, we have shuddered. La Grande Brétèche, with its rank weeds, its wornout casements, its rusted ironwork, its deserted chambers, its closed portals, rose up suddenly, fantastically before me. I would try to penetrate into this mysterious dwelling, by seeking for the knot of its solemn history, the drama that had slain three human beings.

Rosalie was now the most interesting person to me in Vendôme. In spite of the glow of health which beamed from her chubby face, I discovered, after close scrutiny, the trace of hidden thoughts. She held within her the elements either of hope or remorse; her behavior suggested a secret, like those pious women who pray to excess, or a girl who has killed her child and is always hearing its last cry. Yet her attitudes were simple and awkward. There was nothing criminal in her broad foolish smile, if only at the sight of her sturdy bust, covered with a red and blue check kerchief, and inclosed, impressed, and inlaced in a violet and white striped gown, you could not have failed to think she was innocent.

"No," thought I, "I shall not leave Vendôme until I know the whole history of La Grande Brétèche. I will woo Rosalie, if it be absolutely necessary, to gain my end."

"Rosalie," said I one day.

"Yes! if you please, monsieur."

"You are not married?" She gave a little start.

"Oh, I shan't want for a husband, I can tell you, monsieur, when the whim takes me to make a fool of myself," said she, laughing.

She quickly recovered from her inward emotion, for every woman, from a fine lady to a tavern drudge inclusively, has a *sangfroid* especially their own.

"You are fresh and attractive enough not to lack lovers! But tell me, Rosalie, how was it you took a place at an inn after you had been with Madame de Merret? Didn't she leave you any pension?"

"Oh yes, monsieur; but my place is the best in all Vendôme."

This was one of those answers that judges and barristers call *dilatory.* It appeared to me, with regard to this romantic story, that Rosalie stood on the middle square of the chessboard; she was at the very center both of the interest and of the truth of it; she seemed to be bound up in the knot. It was no ordinary inquisition I was attempting: this girl was like the last chapter of a romance. So from this moment Rosalie became the object of my predilections. By dint of studying her, I noticed in her—as one does in all

the women whom we make our chief thought — a number of good qualities. She was neat, diligent, pretty—of course that goes without saying;—in fact, she was soon endowed with all the attractions which our desire attributes to women, in whatever situation they may be placed. A fortnight after the notary's visit, one morning, I said to Rosalie:

"Come, tell me all you know about Madame de Merret!"

"Oh, don't ask me that, Monsieur Horace," she answered with terror. Her pretty face grew dark, her bright vivid coloring faded, and her eyes lost all their soft and innocent luster.

"Well," she said, "as you wish it, I *will* tell you; but whatever you do, keep the secret!"

"Done! my child; I will keep all thy secrets with the integrity of a robber, which is the loyalest that exists."

"If you don't mind," said she, "I had rather you kept them with your own." So she arranged her kerchief, and settled herself as one does to tell a tale, for certainly an attitude of confidence and security is a necessity in story-telling.

The best stories are told at a not too early hour, and just as we are now, at table. No one ever told a story well, standing or fasting. But if it were necessary to reproduce faithfully the diffuse eloquence of Rosalie, a whole volume would scarcely be enough. Now, since the event thus confusedly related to me bears exactly the same relation to the notary's and Madame Lepas's gossip as the mean terms in arithmetical proportion bear to the extreme, I have nothing more to do than to tell it again in a few words; so I abridge.

The bedroom which Madame de Merret occupied at La Brétèche was situated on the ground floor. In it, sunk in the wall, about four feet deep, was a small closet which she used for a wardrobe. Three months before the evening when the circumstances took place which I am about to relate to you, Madame de Merret was so seriously indisposed that her husband left her to sleep alone in her room, and went himself to sleep in a room on the first floor. On this evening, by one of those chances impossible to foresee, he came home from his club (where he went to read the papers and talk politics with the country gentlemen) two hours later than he was accustomed to. His wife thought that he had already come in and gone to bed, and was asleep. But there had been a rather animated discussion on the subject of the invasion of France; the game of billiards too had proved an exciting one, and he had lost forty francs. This was an enormous sum at Vendôme where every one hoards and morals are kept within bounds of most praiseworthy moderation; perhaps this is the source of that true contentment which Parisians do not appreciate. For some time Monsieur de Merret had contented himself with inquiring from Rosalie whether his wife had gone to bed, and on her always answering in the affirmative, he went straight to his own room with that simplicity which comes of habit and confidence. But that night, when he came in, the fancy took him to go and tell his ill-luck to Madame de Merret, and also perhaps receive her sympathy. Now during dinner he had observed that Madame de Merret was very becomingly dressed; and he remarked to himself as he came from his club that his wife's indisposition must have passed off, and that her convalescence had made her more beautiful than before. You see he noticed this, as husbands do everything, a little late in the day. At this moment Rosalie was in the kitchen, engaged in watching the cook and the coachman play out a difficult hand at *brisque;* so instead of calling her, Monsieur de Merret placed his lantern on the bottom step of the stairs, and by its light directed his steps toward his wife's bedroom. His footsteps were easy to recognize as they rang in the vaulted corridor. At the moment he turned the handle of his wife's door, he thought he heard the door of the closet I have mentioned shut; but when he came in Madame de Merret was alone, standing before the fireplace. Her husband in his simplicity thought to himself that it was Rosalie in the wardrobe, but yet a suspicion jangled like a

chime in his ears, and made him distrustful. He looked at his wife ; he saw in her eyes a sort of troubled, fierce expression. "You are late to-night," said she. In her voice, before so pure and gracious, there seemed to him to have come a subtle change. He made no reply, for at that moment Rosalie came in. It was a thunderbolt to him.

He paced up and down the room, his arms folded, going from one window to the other with measured tread. "Have you had bad news, or are you in pain ?" she asked timidly, while Rosalie undressed her. He kept silence. "You can go," said Madame de Merret to her lady's-maid ; "I will put in my curl-papers myself." She divined some evil from the very look on her husband's face, and wished to be alone with him. When Rosalie was gone—or ostensibly gone, for she waited for some minutes in the corridor—Monsieur de Merret came and sat down before his wife, and said coldly, "Madame, there is some one in your wardrobe." She looked calmly at her husband, and said simply, "No, monsieur." This "No" wounded Monsieur de Merret to the quick ; he did not believe it, and yet his wife had never seemed to him purer or holier than she looked at that moment. He rose and went to open the closet. Madame de Merret took his hand and stopped him, looked at him with a melancholy air, and said in a voice of extreme emotion, "Remember, if you do not find any one there, all will be over between us !" The incredible dignity stamped upon the figure of his wife restored him to a profound sense of esteem for her, and inspired him with one of those resolves which only need a vaster stage to become immortal.

"No, Josephine," said he, "I will not go. In either case we should be parted forever. Listen ! I know all the purity of thy soul ; I know that thou leadest a holy life, that thou wouldst not commit a mortal sin to save thyself from death." At these words Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a wild light in her eyes. "Stop, here is thy crucifix," added the man. "Swear to me before God that there is no one there. I will trust you—I will *never* open that door." Madame de Merret took the crucifix and said, "I swear." "Louder," said her husband ; "and repeat, 'I swear before God there is no one in that wardrobe.'" She repeated the phrase unmoved.

"It is well," said Monsieur de Merret coldly.

After a moment's silence : "That's a very fine thing you have, I have not noticed it before," said he, examining the crucifix, which was of ebony and silver, and very finely carved.

"I picked it up at Duvivier's ; he bought it of a Spanish *religieux* last summer, when that troop of Spanish prisoners passed through Vendôme."

"Oh !" said Monsieur de Merret, and hung up the crucifix upon the nail again ; then he rang the bell. Rosalie did not keep him waiting. Monsieur de Merret went quickly to meet her, drew her into the embrasure of the window which looked out on the garden, and said, in a low voice : "I know that Gorenflot wants to marry you, that it's only your poverty which prevents your setting up house, and that you have refused to marry him if he can't manage to make himself a master mason—very well ! go and fetch him ; tell him to come here with his trowel and his other tools. Manage so as to wake no one in his house except him, and you'll make a much finer fortune than you ever even coveted. Above all, go out of this house without chattering ; if you do not—" and he frowned. Rosalie went ; he called her back. "Stop, take my latch-key," said he.

"Jean !" thundered Monsieur de Merret in the corridor.

Jean, who served both as coachman and confidential servant, left his game of *brisque*, and came.

"Go, all of you, to bed," said his master, making him a sign to come up close to him ; then he added, in a low voice, "When they are all asleep—*asleep*, mind—come down and tell me."

Monsieur de Merret, who had not lost sight of his wife all the time he was giving his orders, came back quietly to her

before the fire, and proceeded to relate the events of his billiard match and their discussions at the club. When Rosalie came back, she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret talking amicably together.

The count had recently had ceilings made to all the rooms on the ground floor, which he used for receptions. It was this circumstance that had suggested to him the plan he proceeded to carry into execution.

"Monsieur, Gorenflot is here," said Rosalie in a low voice.

"Let him come in," said the Picard aloud.

Madame de Merret grew a little pale when she saw the mason.

"Gorenflot," said her husband, "go and get some bricks from under the coach-house, and bring enough to wall up the door of that closet; you can use some of the plaster I have by me, for plastering the wall."

Then he drew Rosalie and the workman aside, and said to them, in a low voice: "Listen, Gorenflot, you will sleep here to-night, but to-morrow morning you shall have a passport to go abroad to a town which I will name. I shall send you six thousand francs for the journey. You will remain for ten years in this town; if the place does not please you, you can settle in another, provided only that it is in the same country. You will pass through Paris, wait for me there; there I will settle on you, by deed, six thousand francs more, which shall be paid you on your return, if you have fulfilled the conditions of our bargain. For this sum you must keep the most absolute silence about what you are going to do to-night. As to you, Rosalie, I will give you ten thousand francs, not to be paid over to you until the day of your marriage, and then only on condition that you marry Gorenflot; but to marry, you must be silent; if not, you get no dowry."

"Rosalie," said Madame de Merret, "come and do my hair."

Her husband paced quietly from one end of the room to the other, watching the door, the mason, and his wife, but without displaying any offensive distrust. Gorenflot could not help making some noise. While the workman was unloading his bricks, and her husband was at the end of the room, Madame de Merret seized the opportunity of saying to Rosalie: "A thousand francs a year for you, my dear child, if thou canst tell Gorenflot to leave a chink near the bottom." Then she said aloud, and with perfect composure, "Go and help him!"

Monsieur and Madame de Merret remained silent during the whole time Gorenflot took to wall up the door. With the husband, this silence arose from calculation; he did not wish to give his wife a chance of saying anything which might have a double meaning. With Madame de Merret, it was prudence or pride. When the wall had reached half the necessary height, the cunning mason seized an opportunity when Monsieur de Merret's back was turned, and gave one of the two panes of glass in the door a blow with his pick. This made Madame de Merret understand that Rosalie had spoken to Gorenflot. Then they all three saw the sad dark face of a man, with black hair and gleaming eyes. Before her husband had turned round, the poor woman had time to make a sign with her head to the stranger. By this sign she would have said to him: "Hope!"

At four o'clock, just before daylight, the wall was finished. The mason remained in the house, guarded by Jean, and Monsieur de Merret went to bed in his wife's room. The next morning, while he was getting up, he said carelessly: "The deuce! I must go to the mayor and get that passport." He put his hat on his head, took three steps to the door, then turned round and took the crucifix. His wife trembled with delight. "He is going to Duvivier's," she thought. As soon as he had gone out, Madame de Merret rang for Rosalie. "The pick, the pick!" she cried in a voice of terror; "to work! I saw how Gorenflot began yesterday; we shall have time to make a hole and stop it up again." In the twinkling of an eye Rosalie had brought her

mistress a sort of marline, and she began to set to work to pull down the wall with an energy of which no words could give the least idea. She had already dislodged some of the bricks; she was gathering up her strength for a still more vigorous blow, when she saw Monsieur de Merret standing behind her. She fell on the floor in a swoon.

"Lay madame on the bed," said the Picard coldly.

Foreseeing what would happen during his absence, he had laid a trap for his wife, He had really written to the mayor and sent for Duvivier. In fact the jeweler arrived just after the disorder in which the room lay had been cleared away.

"Duvivier," he asked, "did you not buy some crucifixes from those Spaniards when they passed through the town?"

"No, monsieur."

Monsieur darted the look of a tiger at his wife, and she returned it. "Jean," he added, "have my meals served in Madame de Merret's room; she is ill. I shall not leave her until she is restored to health."

The cruel Picard remained for twenty days close to his wife. During the first part of the time, if any sound came from the walled-up wardrobe, and Josephine began to implore him to have mercy on the dying stranger, he prevented her from saying a single word by answering, "*You swore upon the crucifix that no one was there.*"

V.

ALBERT SAVARUS.

One of the few salons frequented by the archbishop of Besançon, under the Restoration, was that of Madame the Baroness de Watteville, for whom he had a peculiar affection on account of her religious sentiments. A word about this lady, perhaps the most important feminine personage of Besançon.

Monsieur de Watteville, a descendant of the famous Watteville, the most fortunate and most illustrious of murderers and renegades (his extraordinary adventures are much too historical to be related here)—Monsieur de Watteville of the nineteenth century was as gentle and quiet as his ancestor of the grand age had been fiery and turbulent. After having lived in the Comté * like a wood-louse in the crack of a panel, he had married the heiress of the celebrated family of De Rupt. Mademoiselle de Rupt united estates worth twenty thousand francs a year to the ten thousand francs a year in real property of the Baron de Watteville. The arms of the Swiss gentleman (the Wattevilles are Swiss) were placed *en abîme* on the ancient escutcheon of the De Rupts. This marriage, decided on ever since 1802, took place in 1815, after the second Restoration. Three years after the birth of a daughter, all the relations of Madame de Watteville were dead and their inheritances fallen in. They then sold the house of Monsieur de Watteville to establish themselves in the Rue de la Préfecture, in the handsome Hôtel de Rupt, whose vast gardens extend to the Rue du Perron. Madame de Watteville, devout as a young girl, became still more a devotee after her marriage. She is one of the queens of the saintly fraternity which imparts to the best society of Besancon a somber air and prudish manners in harmony with the character of the city.

Monsieur the Baron de Watteville, a spare, thin man of no intellect, appeared wornout, without anybody knowing by what—for he reveled in a gross ignorance—but as his wife was of an ar-like

* A district of France, formerly a province called the Comté, of which Besançon is the chief place.

fair complexion, and an angular disposition become proverbial (they still say "As pointed as Madame de Watteville"), some scoffers in the magistracy maintained that the baron had worn himself out against this rock. Rupt evidently comes from *rupes*. Intelligent observers of social nature will not fail to remark that Rosalie was the only fruit of the union of the De Wattevilles and De Rupts.

Monsieur de Watteville passed his life in an elegant turner's shop; he took to turning! As a supplement to this existence, he indulged in the mania of making collections. To philosophic medical men, given to the study of insanity, this tendency to collect is a first sign of mental alienation, when it is exercised on trifles. The Baron de Watteville amassed the shells and geological fragments of the district of Besançon. People fond of contradicting, particularly the women, said of Monsieur de Watteville, "He has a noble mind! He saw, from the start of his married life, that he would not be able to get the upper hand of his wife, so he threw himself into a mechanical occupation and into good living."

The Hotel de Rupt was not without a certain splendor worthy of the time of Louis XIV., and recalled the nobility of the two families united in 1815. It shone with an ancient luxury which did not know it was the fashion. The crystal lusters cut in the shape of leaves, the hangings, the damask, the carpets, the gilded furniture—everything was in harmony with the old liveries and the old servants. Although served in tarnished family plate, surrounding a glass epergne ornamented with Saxony china, the fare was exquisite. The wines chosen by Monsieur de Watteville, who, to fill up his time and introduce a little variety into his existence, had appointed himself his own cellarman, enjoyed a sort of departmental celebrity. The fortune of Madame de Watteville was considerable, for that of her husband, which consisted of the estate of Rouxey, worth about ten thousand francs a year, had not been augmented by any inheritance. It is needless to observe that the intimate acquaintance of Madame de Watteville with the archbishop had installed at her table the three or four remarkable or intelligent abbés of the archbishopric who did not object to good living.

At a dinner of ceremony, given in return for I know not what marriage feast, at the beginning of the month of September, 1834, at the moment when the women were ranged in a circle before the chimney of the salon, and the men in groups at the windows, there was heard an exclamation at the sight of Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, who was announced.

"Well, how goes the cause?" they cried.

"Won," replied the vicar-general. "The decree of the court, which we despaired of—you know why" (this was an allusion to the composition of the royal court since 1830; the Legitimists had nearly all resigned)—"the decree is just given in our favor on all points, and reverses the judgment of First Instance."

"Everybody thought you were lost."

"And so we were without me. I told our counsel to go off to Paris; and I was able to take, at the moment of battle, a new counsel, to whom we owe the gain of our cause—an extraorkinary man."

"In Besancon?" said Monsieur de Watteville, innocently.

"In Besancon," replied the Abbé de Grancey.

"Ah, yes, Savaron!" said a handsome young man, sitting by the baroness, and named De Soulas.

"He sat up five or six nights, he devoured the papers and briefs; he had seven or eight conferences of several hours with me," resumed Monsieur de Grancey, who reappeared at the Hotel de Rupt for the first time in three weeks. "In short, Monsieur Savaron has just completely beaten the celebrated counsel our adversaries had sent to Paris for. This young man was marvelous, according to the judges. Thus, the chapter is doubly a conqueror; it has conquered in law and also in politics; it has vanquished Liberalism in the person of the defender of our *hotel de ville*. 'Our adversaries,' said

our advocate, 'must not expect to find everywhere a disposition to ruin archbishoprics.' The president was obliged to order silence. All the Bisontines applauded. Thus, the buildings of the old convent remain the property of the chapter of the cathedral of Besançon. Monsieur Savarin afterward invited his brother barrister from Paris to dinner, on leaving the court. The latter, on accepting, said, 'All honor to all conquerors,' and congratulated him on his triumph without rancor."

"But where did you discover this advocate?" said Madame de Watteville. "I never heard his name."

"But you can see his windows from here," replied the vicar-general. "Monsieur Savaron lives in the Rue du Perron; the garden of his house has the same party wall as yours."

"He does not belong to the Comté," said Monsieur de Watteville.

"He belongs so little to anywhere, that nobody knows where he comes from," said Madame de Chavoncourt.

"But what is he?" asked Madame de Watteville, taking the arm of Monsieur de Soulas to go into the dining-room. "If he is a stranger, by what chance has he come to settle at Besancon? It is a very singular idea for a barrister."

"Very singular!" repeated young Amédée de Soulas, whose biography becomes necessary to the comprehension of this history.

From time immemorial France and England have kept up an exchange of frivolities, the more persistent because it escapes the tyranny of the custom-house. The fashion we call English in Paris is called French in London, and *vice versa*. The enmity of the two peoples ceases on two points, the question of words and that of dress. "God save the King," the national air of England, is a piece of music composed by Lulli for the chorus of "Esther" or "Athalie." The *paniers* brought by an Englishwoman to Paris were invented in London, we know why, by a Frenchwoman, the famous Duchess of Portsmouth. They began by making fun of them to such an extent that the first Englishwoman who appeared in the Tuileries was nearly crushed by the crowd; but they were adopted. This fashion tyrannized over the women of Europe for half a century. At the peace of 1815, they laughed for a whole year at the long waists of the English—all Paris went to see Pothier and Brunet in the "Anglaises pour rire;" but in 1816 and 1817, the waistbands of the French, which confined their bosoms in 1814, descended by degrees until they rested on their hips. In ten years, England has made us two little linguistic presents. To the *incroyable*, the *merveilleux*, and the *elegant*, those three heirs of the *petits-maîtres*, whose etymology is rather indecent, have succeeded the *dandy*, then the *lion*. The *lion* has not produced a *lioness*. The *lionne* is due to the famous song of Alfred de Musset:

> "Avez vous vu dans Barcelone . . .
> C'est ma maîtresse et ma lionne."

There has been a fusion, or, if you will, a confusion, between the two terms and the two dominant ideas. When an absurdity amuses Paris, which devours as many *chefs-d'œuvre* as absurdities, it is difficult for the provinces to do without it. Thus, as soon as the *lion* exhibited in Paris his mane, his beard and his mustache, his waistcoats, and his eye-glass held without the help of the hands, by the contraction of the cheek and the eyebrow, the capitals of some of the departments immediately had their sub-*lions* who protested, by the elegance of their trouser-straps, against the slovenliness of their compatriots.

Thus Besancon rejoiced, in 1834, in a *lion* in the person of Monsieur Amédée Sylvain Jacques de Soulas—written Souleyas during the Spanish occupation. Amédée de Soulas is perhaps the only person in Besancon who is descended from a Spanish family. Spain sent her people into the Comté to look after her affairs, but very few Spaniards settled there. The Soulases remained there on account of their alliance with Cardinal Granvelle. Young Monsieur de Soulas was always talking of leaving Besancon — a dull, bigoted, unintellectual city, a war-like

and garrison city, whose manners and customs, however, and whose physiognomy are worth describing. This avowed intention permitted him to live, as a man uncertain of his future, in three rooms, very slightly furnished, at the end of the Rue Neuve, at the spot where it joins the Rue de la Préfecture.

Young Monsieur de Soulas could not dispense with a tiger. This tiger was the son of one of his farmers, a little, thickset boy, fourteen years old, named Babylas. The *lion* dressed his tiger very well: a short coat of iron-gray cloth, with a varnished leather belt, breeches of bright blue plush, red waistcoat, varnished top-boots, a round hat with a black band, and yellow buttons with the arms of Soulas. Amédée gave this boy white cotton gloves, his washing, and thirty-six francs a month to keep himself, which appeared monstrous to the work-girls of Besançon. Four hundred and twenty francs to a child of fifteen, without reckoning perquisites! The perquisites consisted of the sale of the old clothes, of a "tip" when Soulas exchanged one of his horses, and the sale of the manure. The two horses, managed with sordid economy, cost, one with the other, eight hundred francs a year. The accounts for things supplied from Paris, such as perfumery, cravats, jewelry, pots of blacking, and clothes, reached twelve hundred francs. If you add together groom or tiger, horses, superfine get-up, and a rent of six hundred francs, you will get a total of three thousand francs. Now, the father of young Monsieur de Soulas had not left him more than four thousand francs a year, the produce of some rather poor and small farms, which required keeping in repair, and whose repairs imposed an unpleasant uncertainty on their revenue. The *lion* had scarcely three francs a day left for his living, his pocket money, and card money. But he often dined out, and breakfasted with remarkable frugality. When he was absolutely obliged to dine at his own expense, he sent his tiger to the eating-house for two dishes, on which he did not spend more than twenty-five sous. Young Monsieur de Soulas passed for a dissipated fellow who had his follies, while the poor devil, to make the two ends of the year meet, had to exert an ingenuity and a talent that would have been the glory of a good housekeeper. They did not yet know, particularly at Besançon, how far six francs' worth of varnish put on to boots or shoes, yellow gloves at fifty sous cleaned in the most profound secrecy to make them last three times, neckties at six francs which last three months, four waistcoats at twenty-five francs, and trousers which fit well over the boot, impose on a capital. How should it be otherwise, since we see, in Paris, the women bestowing a marked attention on fools who visit them and take precedence of the most remarkable men, by virtue of those frivolous advantages which can be purchased for fifteen louis, including hair-dressing and a fine linen shirt?

If this unfortunate young man appears to you to have become a *lion* at a cheap rate, learn that Amédée de Soulas had been three times to Switzerland by public and private conveyance, twice to Paris, and once from Paris to London. He passed for an accomplished traveler, and could say, "*In England, where I have been,*" etc. The dowagers said to him, "*You, who have been in England,*" etc. He had even penetrated into Lombardy and the shores of the Italian lakes. He read the new works. To sum up, while he was cleaning his gloves, the tiger Babylas told visitors, "Master is studying." Accordingly, they had tried to discredit young Amédée de Soulas by the help of the expression, "He is a man of *advanced ideas*." Amédée possessed the talent of descanting with Bisontine gravity on the commonplace topics of the day, which gave him the credit of being one of the most enlightened members of the nobility. He carried on his person jewelry of the latest fashion, and in his head ideas hall-marked by the press.

In 1834 Amédée was a young man of five and twenty, of middling height, dark, with a strongly developed chest, shoulders to match, well-rounded thighs, a foot already fat, plump white hands, whiskers all round his face, mustaches

which rivaled those of the garrison, a large, good-natured, ruddy face, a flat nose, brown eyes without expression; for the rest, nothing Spanish about him. He was rapidly advancing toward a corpulence fatal to his pretensions. His nails were cultivated, his beard was trimmed, the smallest details of his dress were arranged with English particularity. Accordingly, Amédée de Soulas was considered the handsomest man in Besancon. A hair-dresser, who came to him at a regular hour (another luxury of sixty francs a year), proclaimed him the sovereign arbiter in all matters of taste and elegance. Amédée slept late, dressed, and went out on horseback about mid-day to practice pistol-shooting at one of his farms. He attached the same importance to this occupation as Lord Byron did in his latter days. Then he returned at three o'clock on his horse, to the admiration of the *grisettes* and of everybody who happened to be at their windows. After some pretended studies, which appeared to occupy him until four o'clock, he dressed to go out to dinner, passed the evening in the salons of the Bisontine aristocracy, playing whist, and came home to bed at eleven. No existence could possibly be more open, more steady, or more irreproachable, for he went to church punctually on Sundays and *fête*-days.

In order that you may comprehend how exacting was this life, it is necessary to explain Besancon in a few words. No town offers a more deaf and dumb resistance to progress. At Besancon, the officials, the functionaries, the military—in short, everybody sent there by the government, by Paris, to occupy a post of any sort—are designated in a body by the expressive name of *the Colony*. The Colony is the neutral ground, the only one where, as at church, the noble and the middle-class society of the town can meet. On this ground commence, over a word, a look, or a gesture, those hatreds of house to house between women noble and plebeian, which last until death, and enlarge still more the impassable gulfs which separate the two classes. With the exception of the Clermont Mont-Saint Jeans, the Beauffremonts, the De Sceys, the Gramonts, and a few others, who only inhabit the Comté by their estates, the Bisontine nobility does not date further back than two centuries, the epoch of the conquest by Louis XIV. These people are essentially parliamentary, stiff, stuck-up, grave, positive, and haughty, to a degree with which nothing can compare, not even the court of Vienna; for the Bisontines in this respect would put the Viennese to shame. Victor Hugo, Nodier, Fourier, the glories of the town, are never mentioned; nobody thinks anything of them. The marriages of the nobility are arranged from the cradles of the children, so strictly are the most trifling, as well as the most important, matters settled beforehand. Never has a stranger or an intruder crept into one of these houses, and to get colonels or officers of title belonging to the best families of France (when they happened to be in garrison) received into them has required efforts of diplomacy which Prince Talleyrand would have been glad to know, in order to make use of them at a congress. In 1834 Amédée was the only one who wore straps in Besancon. This explains at once the *lionism* of young Monsieur de Soulas. In brief, a little anecdote will make you understand Besancon.

Some time before the day on which this history commences, the préfecture had felt the necessity of getting from Paris an editor for their paper, in order to defend themselves against the little "Gazette," which the great "Gazette" had laid at Besancon, and against the "Patriote," which the Republic kept sputtering there. Paris sent a young man ignorant of the Comté, who came out with an article (*premier Besançon*) in the style of the *Charivari*. The leader of the moderate party, a member of the town council, sent for the journalist and said to him—

"Learn, sir, that we are serious—more than serious, tedious. We do not want to be amused, and we are furious at having laughed. Be as hard to digest as the thickest amplifications of the 'Revue des

Deux Mondes,' and you will scarcely be up to the tone of the Bisontines."

The editor took the warning, and talked the most incomprehensible philosophic jargon. He had a perfect success.

If young Monsieur de Soulas did not lose in the estimation of the salons of Besancon, it was pure vanity on their part; the aristocracy was glad to have the air of modernizing itself, and to be able to present to the noble Parisians traveling in the Comté a young man who resembled them—almost. All this hidden labor, all this powder thrown into people's eyes, this apparent folly, and this latent prudence had an end, without which the Bisontine *lion* would not have belonged to the province. Amédée wanted to arrive at a favorable marriage by proving, some day, that his farms were not mortgaged, and that he had saved money. He wanted to occupy the attention of the town, to be its handsomest and most elegant man, in order to obtain first the notice, and then the hand, of Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville.

In 1830, at the moment when young Monsieur de Soulas began his profession of a dandy, Rosalie was fourteen.

In 1834, then, Mademoiselle de Watteville had attained the age when a young person is easily struck by the peculiarities which attracted to Amédée the attention of the town. There are a great many *lions* who become *lions* by calculation and on speculation. The Wattevilles, with an income of fifty thousand francs a year for the last twelve years, did not spend more than four-and-twenty thousand a year, although they entertained the best society of Besancon on Mondays and Fridays. They gave a dinner on Monday, and a *soirée* on Friday. To what a sum would not six-and-twenty thousand francs, annually economized, and invested with the prudence which distinguishes these old families, amount in twelve years? It was pretty generally believed that Madame de Watteville, satisfied with the amount of her landed property, had put her economies into the Three per Cents in 1830. The fortune of Rosalie would amount then, according to the best informed, to twenty thousand francs a year.

For five years, the *lion* had worked like a mole to establish himself in the good graces of the severe baroness, while living in a style to flatter the self-love of Mademoiselle de Watteville. The baroness was in the secret of the contrivances by which Amédée managed to keep up his position in Besancon, and esteemed him for them. Soulas had put himself under the wing of the baroness when she was thirty. He had had the audacity to admire her and make her his idol then; he had now gradually attained the privilege, he alone of all the world, of relating to her the high-spiced anecdotes which nearly all devotees love to hear, authorized as they are by their great virtues to contemplate the abyss without falling into it, and the snares of the devil without being caught in them. Do you understand why this *lion* did not indulge in the slightest intrigue? He crystalized his life, he lived almost in the street, in order to play the part of a sacrificed lover to the baroness, and enable her to indulge the spirit in the sins she denied to the flesh. A man who possesses the privilege of dropping naughty things into the ear of a devotee is always a charming man in her eyes. If this exemplary *lion* had known the human heart better, he might without danger have allowed himself some little intrigues with the *grisettes* of Besancon, who looked upon him as a king; it would probably only have helped on his affairs with the severe and prudish baroness. To Rosalie this Cato appeared extravagant; he professed a life of elegance, he showed her in perspective the brilliant part of a woman of fashion at Paris, to which he would go as a deputy. These knowing maneuvers were crowned with full success. In 1834, the mothers of the forty noble families which composed the choice society of Besancon quoted Monsieur de Soulas as the most charming young man of Besancon; nobody dared to set himself up against the cock of the Hotel de Rupt, and all Besancon regarded him as the future spouse of Rosalie de Watteville. There had already

been some words exchanged between the baroness and Amédée, which the pretended incapacity of the baron rendered almost a guarantee.

Mademoiselle Rosalie de Watteville, whom her fortune (which would some day be enormous) invested with considerable importance, brought up within the walls of the Hotel de Rupt—which her mother rarely quitted, so strongly was she attached to the dear archbishop—had been strictly kept under by an exclusively religious education, and by the despotism of her mother, who managed her severely on principle. Rosalie knew absolutely nothing. Is it knowing anything to have studied geography in Guthrie, sacred history, ancient history, the history of France, and the four rules, the whole passed through the sieve by an old Jesuit? Drawing, music, and dancing were forbidden, as more likely to corrupt than embellish life. The baroness taught her daughter all the stitches possible in tapestry and feminine handiwork: sewing, embroidery, and knitting. At seventeen, Rosalie had read nothing but the "Lettres Édifiantes" and works on heraldry. Never had a newspaper sullied her sight. She heard mass every morning at the cathedral, to which she was taken by her mother; came home to breakfast, studied, after a little walk in the garden, and received visitors, seated by the baroness, until dinner time; then afterward, except on Mondays and Fridays, she accompanied Madame de Watteville to the *soirées*, without being able to talk more than was allowed by the maternal regulations.

At eighteen Mademoiselle de Watteville was a young girl, frail, slender, flat, fair, white, and of the greatest insignificance. Her eyes, of a pale blue, were embellished by the play of the eyelids, which, when lowered, produced a shade on the cheek; freckles impaired the effect of her forehead, otherwise well shaped. Her face exactly resembled the saints of Albert Durer and the painters before Perugino—the same full, though slender, shape, the same delicacy saddened by ecstasy, the same severe simplicity. Everything about her, even her attitude, recalled those virgins whose beauty appears in its mystic luster only to the eye of the attentive connoisseur. She had fine, but red, hands, and the prettiest foot—the foot of an aristocrat. She generally wore simple cotton dresses, but on Sundays and *fêtes* her mother allowed her silk ones. Her bonnets, made at Besancon, rendered her almost ugly; while her mother endeavored to borrow grace, beauty, and elegance from the milliners of Paris, from whence she procured all the slightest articles of dress, by the care of young Monsieur de Soulas. Rosalie had never worn silk stockings nor boots, but cotton stockings and leather shoes. On gala days she was dressed in a muslin frock, with no head-dress, and had bronzed leather shoes. This education, and the modest demeanor of Rosalie, concealed a character of iron. Physiologists and profound observers of human nature will tell you, to your great astonishment, perhaps, that humorous characters, wit, and genius reappear in families at great intervals, absolutely like what are called hereditary maladies. Thus talent, like the gout, sometimes jumps over two generations. We have an illustrious example of this phenomenon in George Sand, in whom are revived the puissant and inventive genius of Marshal de Saxe, whose natural granddaughter she is. The decisive character, the romantic audacity, of the famous Watteville were renewed in the character of his great-niece, still further aggravated by the tenacity and the family pride of the De Rupts. But these qualities, or these defects, if you will, were as profoundly hidden in this young girl's mind, apparently soft and feeble, as the boiling lava in a mountain before it becomes a volcano. Madame de Watteville alone, perhaps, suspected this legacy of the two races. She behaved so severely to her Rosalie, that she replied one day to the archbishop, who reproached her with treating her too harshly—

"Leave me to manage her, monseigneur; I know her. She has got more than one Beelzebub in her body."

The baroness watched her daughter all the more because she thought her honor as a mother pledged. In short, she had nothing else to do. Clotilde de Rupt, then thirty-five years old, and almost the widow of a husband who turned egg-cups in all sorts of wood, who set his heart on making rings with six streaks in ironwood, and manufactured snuff-boxes for his friends, coquetted in all innocence and honor with Amédée de Soulas. When this young man was in the house she sent away and recalled her daughter in turns, and tried to surprise in this young heart a movement of jealousy, in order to have an opportunity of quelling it. She imitated the police in their dealings with the Republicans; but it was in vain. Rosalie did not give way to any sort of insurbordination. Then the austere devotee reproached her daughter with her complete insensibility. Rosalie knew her mother well enough to know that, if she had appeared to like young Monsieur de Soulas, she would have drawn down on herself a sharp reproof. So, to all her mother's provocation, she replied by phrases of the sort improperly called Jesuitical; for the Jesuits were strong and able, and these reticences are the ramparts behind which weakness shelters itself. Then the mother accused her daughter of dissimulation. If, by misfortune, a spark of the true character of the Watteville and De Rupt broke out, the mother armed herself with the respect due from children to their parents to restore Rosalie to passive obedience. This secret combat took place in the most secret precincts of domestic life, with closed doors.

The vicar-general, the dear Abbé de Grancey, the friend of the late archbishop, however able he might be in his capacity of grand penitentiary of the diocese, could not tell whether this struggle had engendered a hatred between the mother and daughter, whether the mother was jealous beforehand, or whether the courtship of the daughter in the person of the mother by Amédée had not gone beyond the bounds. In his character of friend of the family, he did not confess either the mother or the daughter. Rosalie, a little too much chastised, morally speaking, on account of young Monsieur de Soulas, to use a familiar expression, could not bear him. Accordingly, when he addressed his conversation to her, endeavoring to surprise her heart, she received him pretty coldly. This repugnance, visible only to the eyes of her mother, was a continual subject of reprimand.

"Rosalie, I do not know why you show so much coldness to Amédée. Is it because he is the friend of the family, and pleases *your father* and me?"

"Ah, mamma," answered the poor child one day, "if I treated him well, should I not be still more in the wrong?"

"What is the meaning of that?" exclaimed Madame de Watteville. "What do you mean by such words? Your mother is unjust, perhaps, and would be, in any case, according to you. Never let your mouth utter such an answer to your mother!" etc.

This quarrel lasted three hours and three-quarters. Rosalie remarked it. The mother became pale with rage, and sent Rosalie to her room, where Rosalie studied the meaning of this scene without being able to discover it—she was so innocent! Thus, young Monsieur de Soulas, whom all the town of Besancon thought very near the end toward which he was straining, cravats spread, by force of pots of varnish—the end which made him use up so much black pomade for his mustaches, so many fine waistcoats, horse-shoes, and stays (for he wore a leather waistcoat, the *lion's* stays)—Amédée was further from it than the first comer, although he had the worthy and noble Abbé de Grancey in his favor. Besides, Rosalie did not yet know, at the moment when this history begins, that the young Count Amédée de Soulas was destined for her.

"Madame," said Monsieur de Soulas, addressing the baroness, giving the soup, which was a little too hot, time to cool, and affecting to render his narrative quasi-romantic, "one fine morning the mail deposited at the Hôtel National a Parisian who, after having looked about for apartments, decided on the first floor

of the house of Mademoiselle Galard, Rue du Perron. Then the *stranger* went straight to the *mairie* to deposit a declaration of domicile, real and political. Afterward he had himself inscribed in the list of counsel practicing in the court, presenting certificates quite in order; and he left with all his new *confrères*, with all the ministerial officers, with all the judges of the court, and all the members of the tribunal, a card on which is inscribed, '*Albert Savaron.*'"

"The name of Savaron is celebrated," said Mademoiselle de Watteville, very strong in heraldry. "The Savarons de Savarus are one of the oldest, the noblest, and the richest families in Belgium."

"He is a Frenchman and a troubadour," resumed Amédée de Soulas. "If he wants to take the arms of Savaron de Savarus, it must be with a bar. There is only a demoiselle Savarus in Belgium, a rich, marriageable heiress."

"The bar is indeed a sign of bastardy; but the bastard of a Count of Savarus is noble," replied Rosalie.

"That will do, mademoiselle," said the baroness.

"You wanted her to know heraldry," said Monsieur de Watteville, "and she knows it well."

"Pray go on, Monsieur de Soulas."

"You can conceive that in a town where everything is classed, defined, known, placed, reckoned up, and numbered, as at Besancon, Albert Savaron was received by our barristers without difficulty. Every one contented himself with saying, 'Here's a poor devil who does not know Besancon. Who the devil can have advised him to come here? What does he mean to do? To send his card to the magistrates instead of calling himself! What a blunder!' Accordingly, three days afterward, no more Savaron. He has taken the late Monsieur Galard's old *valet-de-chambre*, Jerome, who can do a little cooking, for his servant. People have forgotten Albert Savaron all the more readily because nobody has seen or met him since."

"Does he not go to mass, then?" said Madame de Chavoncourt.

"He goes on Sundays to St. Pierre, but to the first mass at eight o'clock. He gets up every night between one and two o'clock, works until eight, then he breakfasts, and afterward works again. He walks in the garden, and goes round it fifty or sixty times; then he goes in, dines, and goes to bed between six and seven."

"How do you know all that?" said Madame de Chavoncourt to Monsieur de Soulas.

"In the first place, madame, I live in the Rue Neuve, at the corner of the Rue du Perron; I look on to the house in which this mysterious personage lodges; and then there are mutual confabulations between my tiger and Jerome."

"You talk to Babylas, then?"

"What would you have me do when I am out riding?"

"Well, how was it you chose a stranger for your counsel?" said the baroness, thus turning the conversation, to the vicar-general.

"The first president did this advocate the turn of appointing him to defend officially a half-imbecile peasant accused of forgery. Monsieur Savaron got the poor man acquitted, by proving his innocence and showing that he had been the tool of the real culprits. Not only was his theory triumphant, but it necessitated the arrest of two of the witnesses, who were found guilty and condemned. His pleadings struck the court and the jury. One of them, a merchant, the next day confided to Monsieur Savaron a difficult case, which he won. In the situation in which we were placed by the impossibility of Monsieur Berryer's coming to Besancon, Monsieur de Garcenault advised us to have this Monsieur Albert Savaron, and predicted our success. As soon as I had seen him and heard him, I had faith in him; and I was not deceived."

"Is there anything extraordinary about him, then?" inquired Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Certainly, madame," answered the vicar-general.

"Well, then, tell us all about it," said Madame de Watteville.

"The first time I saw him," said the Abbé de Grancey, "he received me in the room next to the antechamber (good Monsieur Galard's old salon), which he has had painted in old oak, and which I found entirely covered with law-books, contained in bookcases also painted like old wood. The painting and the books are the only luxuries in this apartment, for the furniture consists of a bureau of old carved wood, six old tapestry arm-chairs, carmelite colored curtains with green borders to the windows, and a green carpet on the floor. The stove of the antechamber also warms this library. While waiting there for him, I did not figure to myself our advocate with a youthful mien. This singular frame is really in harmony with the picture; for when Monsieur Savaron came, he wore a black merino dressing-gown tied with a girdle of red cord, red slippers, a red flannel waistcoat, and a red skull-cap.

"The livery of the devil!" exclaimed Madame de Watteville.

"Yes," said the abbé, "but a superb head: black hair, already mingled with white—hair like St. Peter and St. Paul have in our pictures, in thick and glossy curls as stiff as horse-hair; a neck as white and round as a woman's; a magnificent forehead, divided by the strong furrow which great projects, great ideas, and deep meditations trace on the brow of great men; an olive complexion veined with red marks; a square nose, eyes of fire, and hollow cheeks marked with two long lines full of sufferings; a mouth with a sardonic smile, and a small chin, sharp and too short; crow's-feet on the temples; sunken eyes rolling in their orbits like two globes of fire: but, in spite of all these indications of violent passions, an air of calm and profound resignation, a voice of penetrating sweetness, and which surprised me in court by its flexibility — the true orator's voice, now pure and measured, now insinuating, and thundering when necessary, next adapting itself to sarcasm, and becoming then cutting. Monsieur Albert Savaron is of middle height, neither stout nor thin. Finally, he has a bishop's hand. The second time I went to see him, he received me in his room, which is next to the library, and smiled at my astonishment on seeing a shabby wash-stand, an old carpet, a school-boy's bedstead, and calico curtains to the windows. He came out of his cabinet, into which nobody ever penetrates, Jerome told me, who never enters it, and contented himself with knocking at the door. Monsieur Savaron himself locked the door before me. The third time he was breakfasting in his library, in the most frugal style; but this time, as he had spent the night in examining our papers, as I was with our lawyer, as we were to spend a long time together, and dear Monsieur Girardet is verbose, I was able to study this stranger. Certainly, he is no ordinary man. There is more than one secret behind these features at once terrible and gentle, patient and impatient, full and hollow. I found that he stooped slightly, like all men who have something heavy to carry."

"Why has this eloquent man left Paris? With what intentions has he come to Besancon? Has nobody told him how little chance of success there is for strangers? They will make use of him, but the Bisontines will not let him make use of them. Why, when he had come, did he take so little trouble that it required the caprice of the first president to bring him into notice?" said the handsome Madame de Chavoncourt.

"After having closely studied this 'noble head,'" resumed the Abbé de Grancey, giving his interrupter a sly look, which left her to suppose that he did not tell all he knew, "and particularly after having heard his reply this morning to one of the eagles of the Paris bar, I think that this man will produce a great sensation some day."

"What is he to us? Your cause is gained and you have paid him," said Madame de Watteville, observing her daughter, who, ever since the vicar-general had been speaking, had seemed to hang on to his lips.

The conversation took another turn, and no more was said about Albert Savaron.

The portrait sketched by the most able

of the vicars-general of the diocese had all the attraction of romance for Rosalie, because it really contained a romance. For the first time in her life, she encountered the exceptional and the marvelous, longed for by all youthful imaginations, and irresistibly attractive to the lively curiosity of Rosalie's age. What an ideal being was this Albert, somber, suffering, eloquent, and studious, compared by Mademoiselle de Watteville to this great chubby-cheeked count, bursting with health, playing the gallant, talking about elegance in the face of the splendor of the old Counts de Rupt! Amédée only brought her quarrels and scoldings; besides, she knew him only too well, and this Albert Savaron offered many a riddle to guess at.

"Albert Savaron de Savarus," she repeated to herself. And then to see him, to catch a glimpse of him! It was the desire of a young girl until then without desires. She revolved in her heart, in her imagination, and in her head, the minutest expressions of the Abbé de Grancey—for every word had struck home. "A fine forehead?" she said to herself, looking at the forehead of every man sitting at the table. "I don't see a single fine one. Monsieur de Soulas's is too prominent. Monsieur de Grancey's is fine; but he is seventy and has no hair—you can't tell where his forehead finishes."

"What is the matter, Rosalie? You are not eating."

"I am not hungry, mamma," said she. "A bishop's hands?" she continued to herself. "I cannot remember our handsome archbishop's, although he confirmed me." At length, in the midst of her wanderings to and fro in the labyrinth of her memory, she recollected, shining through the trees of the neighboring gardens, a lighted window which she had seen from her bed when she woke by chance in the night. "It was his light, then," she said to herself, "I shall be able to see him! I shall see him."

"Monsieur de Grancey, is the chapter suit quite finished?" said Rosalie, quite unconnectedly, to the vicar-general during a moment of silence.

Madame de Watteville rapidly exchanged looks with the vicar-general.

"And how can that concern you, my dear child?" said she to Rosalie, with a feigned gentleness that rendered her daughter circumspect for the rest of her days.

"They can appeal, but our adversaries will think twice about that," answered the abbé.

"I should never have believed that Rosalie could be thinking about a lawsuit all dinner time," said Madame de Watteville.

"Nor I either," said Rosalie with a laughable air of abstraction. "But Monsieur de Grancey was so absorbed in it that I became interested."

They rose from table, and the company returned to the salon. For the whole of the evening, Rosalie listened to hear whether they would talk about Albert Savaron; but beyond the congratulations addressed by each new-comer to the abbé on the gain of the cause, and with which no one mingled the praises of the counsel, he was not mentioned.

Mademoiselle de Watteville awaited the night with impatience; she had promised herself to get up between two and three in the morning, to look at the windows of Albert's study. When this hour was come, she felt almost a pleasure in contemplating the gleam thrown by the advocate's candles through the almost leafless trees. By the aid of the excellent sight a young girl always possesses, and which curiosity seems to extend, she saw Albert writing. She thought she could distinguish the color of the furniture, which seemed to be red. The chimney sent up over the roof a thick column of smoke.

"While all the world sleeps, he watches—like God!" she said to herself.

The education of girls comprises problems so grave, for the future of a nation depends on its mothers, that for a long while the University of France has undertaken the task of taking no notice of them. Here is one of these problems: Ought we to enlighten young girls? Ought we to restrict their understanding? The re-

ligious system is, of course, restrictive. If you enlighten them, you make demons of them prematurely; if you prevent them from thinking, you arrive at the sudden explosion so well painted in the character of Agnes by Molière, and you put this pent-up intelligence, so fresh and so perspicacious, rapid and consistent as a savage, at the mercy of an accident—a fatal crisis brought about in the case of Mademoiselle de Watteville by the imprudent sketch indulged in at table by one of the most prudent abbés of the prudent chapter of Besancon.

The next morning, while dressing, Mademoiselle de Watteville necessarily saw Albert Savaron walking in the garden adjoining that of the Hôtel de Rupt.

"What would have become of me," thought she, "if he had lived anywhere else? Here I can at least see him. What is he thinking about?"

After having seen at a distance this extraordinary man, the only one whose physiognomy stood out vigorously from the mass of Bisontine faces hitherto noticed, Rosalie jumped rapidly to the idea of penetrating into his home life, of learning the reason of so much mystery, of hearing this eloquent voice, and obtaining a glance from those splendid eyes. She wished to do all this—but how?

The whole day long, she stitched away at her embroidery with the obtuse attention of a young girl who seems, like Agnes, to be thinking about nothing, but who is reflecting on everything so carefully that her stratagems are infallible. From this profound meditation, there resulted in Rosalie a desire to go to confession. The next morning, after mass, she had a little conference at St. Pierre with the Abbé Giroud, and wheedled him so well that the confession was appointed for Sunday morning, at half-past seven, before the eight o'clock mass. She told a dozen lies to be able to be in the church, just once, at the time the barrister came to hear mass. Finally, she was taken with an excessive affection for her father; she went to see him in his workshop, and asked him a thousand questions about the art of turning, in order to get to advise her father to turn something large—some columns. After having got her father on to spiral columns, one of the difficulties of the turner's art, she advised him to take advantage of a large heap of stones, which happened to be in the middle of the garden, to have a grotto built, on which he could place a little temple in the style of a Belvedere, for which his spiral columns could be made use of, and would shine in the eyes of all his friends.

In the midst of the joy this enterprise caused this poor man without an occupation, Rosalie said, embracing him, "Mind you don't tell mamma who you got the idea from; she would scold me."

"You need not fear," replied Monsieur de Watteville, who groaned under the oppression of the terrible daughter of the De Rupts quite as much as his daughter.

And so Rosalie attained the certainty of soon seeing erected a charming observatory, from which the eye could plunge into the cabinet of the barrister. And there are men for whom young girls perform similar feats of diplomacy, and who, for the most part, like Albert Savaron, know nothing about them.

The Sunday, so impatiently awaited, arrived, and the toilet of Rosalie was performed with a care which drew a smile from Mariette, the maid of Madame and Mademoiselle de Watteville.

"This is the first time I have seen mademoiselle so particular," said Mariette.

"You make me think," said Rosalie, giving Mariette a look which planted poppies on the waiting-maid's cheeks, "that there are days on which you also are more particular than on others."

On leaving the portico, in crossing the courtyard, in passing through the gateway, in walking through the street, Rosalie's heart beat as if with the presentiment of a great event. She had not known until then what it was to walk in the streets. For a moment she had believed her mother would read her projects on her brow, and forbid her going to confession. She felt new blood in her feet; she raised them as if she were walking on fire! Of course, she had made an appointment for a quarter-past eight with

her confessor, and told her mother eight, in order to be able to wait about a quarter of an hour for Albert. She got to the church before mass, and, after saying a short prayer, she went to see whether the Abbé Giroud was in his confessional, simply to be able to look about, and managed to place herself where she could see Albert the moment he entered the church.

A man must be atrociously ugly not to appear handsome in the disposition to which curiosity had brought Mademoiselle de Watteville. Now, Albert Savaron, already very remarkable, made all the more impression on Rosalie that his conduct, his demeanor, everything, even to his dress, had that indefinable something which can only be explained by the word *mystery*. He entered. The church, until then somber, appeared to Rosalie as if illuminated. The young girl was charmed by the slow and almost solemn gait of the people who carry a world on their shoulders, and whose profound gaze and gestures agree in expressing a desolating or a dominating idea. Rosalie understood then the words of the vicar-general to their full extent. Yes, these yellowish-brown eyes, shot with threads of gold, veiled an ardor which betrayed itself by sudden jets. Rosalie, with an imprudence which Mariette remarked, placed herself in the path of the advocate, so as to exchange a glance with him; and this courted glance changed her blood, for her blood seethed and boiled as if its heat had been doubled. As soon as Albert had taken his seat, Mademoiselle de Watteville had quickly chosen her place, so as to see him perfectly during all the time the Abbé Giroud left her. When Mariette said, "There is Monsieur Giroud," it seemed to Rosalie that this time had not been more than a few minutes. When she came out of the confessional, the mass was finished; Albert had left the church.

"The vicar-general is right," thought she: "*he* suffers! Why has this eagle, for he has the eyes of an eagle, swooped down upon Besancon! Oh, I must know everything; but how?"

Under the fire of this new desire, Rosalie put in the stitches of her tapestry work with admirable nicety, and these were her meditations beneath an air of candor which simulated simplicity well enough to deceive Madame de Watteville.

Since the Sunday when Mademoiselle de Watteville had received this glance, or, if you will, this "baptism of fire"—Napoleon's magnificent expression, which may be applied to love—she urged on the affair of the Belvedere hotly.

"Mamma," said she, when once there were two columns turned, "my father has got a singular idea in his head. He is turning columns for a Belvedere, which he intends to have erected by making use of the heap of stones which is in the middle of the garden. Do you approve of it? It seems to me that—"

"I approve of everything your father does," replied Madame de Watteville sharply, "and it is the duty of a wife to submit to her husband, even if she does not approve of his ideas. Why should I oppose a thing, which is indifferent in itself, from the moment it amuses Monsieur de Watteville?"

"But from there we shall see into Monsieur de Soulas's house, and Monsieur de Soulas will see us when we are there. Perhaps people will talk—"

"Do you aspire to manage your parents, Rosalie, and to know more than they about life and propriety?"

"I say no more, mamma. And, besides, my father says the grotto will make a room where we can be cool and have our coffee."

"Your father has had excellent ideas," replied Madame de Watteville, who wanted to go and see the columns.

She gave her approbation to the baron's project, and pointed out, for the erection of the building, a place at the end of the garden, where you could not be seen by Monsieur de Soulas, but could see into Monsieur Albert Savaron's admirably well. A builder was sent for, who undertook to make a grotto, with a path of three feet wide leading to its summit, and periwinkles, iris, viburnum, ivy, honeysuckle, and ivy grape growing in the rock-work. The baroness conceived the idea

of having the interior of the grotto decorated with rustic woodwork, then all the fashion for flower-stands, and putting up a looking-glass at the end, with a covered divan and a checkered bark table. Monsieur de Soulas proposed to have the floor made of asphalte. Rosalie thought of having a rustic wood chandelier suspended from the roof.

"The Wattevilles are having something charming made in their garden," they said in Besancon.

"They are rich. They can well spend a thousand crowns on a fancy."

"A thousand crowns!" exclaimed Madame de Chavoncourt.

"Yes, a thousand crowns," said young Monsieur de Soulas. "They have got a man from Paris to rusticate the interior; but it will be very pretty. Monsieur de Watteville himself is making the chandelier; he is carving the wood."

"They say Berquet is going to build a cellar," said an abbe.

"No," replied young Monsieur de Soulas. "He is laying the foundation of the work in cement, so that there may be no dampness."

"You know the least thing that goes on in the house," said Madame de Chavoncourt angrily, looking at one of her great girls, ready to be married a year ago.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who experienced a feeling of pride in thinking of the success of her Belvedere, recognized in herself an eminent superiority to all that surrounded her. Nobody had imagined that a young girl, considered dull and silly, had simply wanted to see a little more closely into the cabinet of the advocate Savaron.

The startling speech of Albert Savaron for the chapter of the cathedral was all the more promptly forgotten that it aroused the envy of the bar. Besides, faithful to his retirement, Savaron did not show himself anywhere. Having no touters and seeing nobody, he increased the chances of oblivion, already pretty abundant for a stranger in a town like Besancon. However, he spoke three times in the Tribunal of Commerce, in three complicated cases which would have to go to the court. He thus got as clients four of the largest merchants of the town, who recognized in him so much sense, and what the provinces call good judgment, that they gave him their business. The day that the house of Watteville inaugurated their Belvedere, Savaron also erected his monument. Thanks to the secret relations which he had established with the high commerce of Besancon, he founded a fortnightly review, called the "Revue de l'Est," by means of forty shares of five hundred francs each, placed in the hands of his first ten clients, whom he impressed with the necessity of promoting the destiny of Besancon, the town which ought to concentrate the traffic between Mulhouse and Lyon, the capital point between the Rhine and the Rhône.

To compete with Strasbourg, ought not Besancon to be a center of enlightenment as well as a center of commerce? The elevated questions relating to the interests of the East could only be discussed in a "Review." What a triumph to snatch from Strasbourg and Dijon their literary influence and contend with Parisian centralization! These considerations, put forward by Albert, were repeated by the ten merchants, who took to themselves the credit of them.

The barrister Savaron did not commit the blunder of using his own name. He left the financial direction to his first client, Monsieur Boucher, related through his wife to one of the largest publishers of important ecclesiastical works; but he reserved to himself the editorship, with a share, as the founder, in the profits. Commerce made an appeal to Dôle, to Dijon, to Salins, to Neufchâtel, the Jura, Bourg, Nantua, Lons-le-Saulnier. They invited assistance from the intelligence and the efforts of all studious men in the three provinces of Bugey, Bresse, and the Comté. Thanks to the relations of commerce and confraternity, a hundred and fifty subscriptions were taken up, and in consideration of the cheapness. The "Review" cost eight francs a quarter. To avoid wounding provincial self-love, the barrister had the good sense to make the literary direction of this "Review"

the object of the desires of the eldest son of Monsieur Boucher, a young man of two and twenty, very eager for fame, to whom the snares and troubles of literary management were entirely unknown. Albert kept the upper hand in secret, and made Alfred his lieutenant. Alfred was the only person in Besancon with whom the king of the bar became familiar. Alfred came to confer with Albert of a morning in the garden on the contents of the number. It is needless to say that the first number contained a meditation by Alfred, which was approved of by Savaron. In his conversation with Alfred, Albert allowed great ideas to escape him, and the subjects of articles of which young Boucher availed himself; so that the merchant's son thought he was taking advantage of the great man! Albert was a man of genius, a profound politician, to Alfred. The merchants, enchanted with the success of the "Review," only had to pay up three-tenths of their shares. Two hundred subscriptions more, and the "Review" would pay five per cent dividend to its shareholders, the editing not being paid for. The editing was beyond price.

At the third number, the "Review" had obtained the exchange with all the papers in France, which Albert read at home. This third number contained a tale signed A. S., and attributed to the famous advocate. Notwithstanding the slight attention the high society of Besancon accorded to the "Review," which was accused of Liberalism, this novel, the first hatched in the Comté, was discussed at Madame de Chavoncourt's in the middle of the winter.

"Father," said Rosalie, "there is a "Review" published in Besancon. You ought to subscribe to it. And keep it in your room, for mamma would not let me read it; but you will lend it to me."

Eager to obey his dear Rosalie, who for five months had given him so many proofs of filial affection, Monsieur de Watteville went himself to pay a year's subscription to the "Revue de l'Est," and lent the four numbers which had already appeared to his daughter. During the night Rosalie was able to devour this tale, the first she had ever read in her life. But, then, she had only begun to live for two months! Accordingly, the effect produced on her by this work must not be judged by ordinary data. Without prejudging the more or less of merit in this composition, due to a Parisian who brought into the province the style—the brilliance, if you will —of the new school of literature, it could not help being a *chef-d'œuvre* to a young girl devoting her virgin intelligence and her pure heart to a first work of this nature. Besides, from what she had heard of it, Rosalie had conceived by intuition an idea which singularly heightened the value of this novel. She hoped to find in it the sentiments, and perhaps something of the life, of Albert. From the first pages this opinion of hers acquired so much consistency that, after having finished this fragment, she felt certain she did not deceive herself.

Here, then, is this narrative, in which, according to the critics of the Chavoncourt circle, Albert had imitated certain modern writers who, for want of invention, relate their own joys and their own griefs, or the mysterious events of their existence.

LOVE'S AMBITION.

"In 1823, two young men, who had arranged to make the tour of Switzerland, started from Lucerne one fine morning in July, in a boat rowed by three men. They were going to Fluelen, proposing to stop at all the celebrated spots on the Lake of the Four Cantons.

"The landscapes which border the water from Lucerne to Fluelen present all the combinations that the most exacting imagination can demand from mountains and rivers, from lakes and rocks, from streams and verdure, from trees and torrents. You have, by turns, austere solitudes and graceful promenades, smiling and coquettish plains, forests placed like plumes on the perpendicular granite, cool and solitary bays which gradually disclose themselves, valleys whose treasures appear embellished by a dreamy distance.

"In passing before the charming little town of Gersau, one of the two friends made a prolonged observation of a wooden house, which seemed to have been recently built, surrounded by a paling, situated on a promontory, and almost bathed by the water. As the boat passed before it, a woman's head appeared from the back of the room situated on the top floor of this house, to observe the effect of the boat on the lake. One of the young men caught the glance very indifferently thrown by the unknown.

"'Let us stop here,' said he to his friend. 'We were going to make Lucerne our headquarters for exploring Switzerland. You will not object, Léopold, to my changing my mind and staying here in charge of the baggage? You will then be able to do just as you like. As for me, my voyage is finished. Boatmen, put back and land us at this village; we will breakfast there. I will go and fetch all our luggage from Lucerne; and you will know, before leaving here, which house I am lodging in, so as to be able to find me on your return."

"'Here, or at Lucerne,' said Léopold; 'it does not matter enough for me to prevent your obeying a caprice.'

"These two young men were two friends in the true sense of the word. They were the same age, had been to the same school, and, after having finished the study of the law, they were employing the vacation for the classic tour of Switzerland. In accordance with the paternal will, Léopold was destined to the profession of a notary in Paris. His upright mind, his gentleness, the tranquillity of his character, and his intellect, guaranteed his docility. Léopold saw himself a notary at Paris; his life was spread out before him like one of those high-roads which traverse the plains of France. He embraced it to its fullest extent with a resignation full of philosophy.

"The character of his companion, whom we will call Rodolphe, offered a contrast to his, whose antagonism had, no doubt, had the effect of drawing closer the ties which united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a great nobleman, who was surprised by a premature death without having been able to take measures to provide for a woman tenderly beloved, and for Rodolphe. Thus ruined by a stroke of fate, the mother of Rodolphe had recourse to an heroic expedient. She sold all that she possessed through the munificence of the father of her child, made up a sum of a hundred and odd thousand francs, invested it in an annuity on her own life at a high rate, and procured herself in this way an income of about fifteen thousand francs, making resolution to devote it all to the education of her son, in order to endow him with the personal advantages most likely to insure his fortune, and to lay by a capital for him, by dint of economy, by the time he had attained his majority. It was bold; it was relying on her own life; but without this boldness it would, no doubt, have been impossible for this good mother to live and properly educate her child—her only hope, her future, and the sole source of her joys. The issue of one of the most charming Parisians and a man remarkable among the aristocracy of Brabant, the fruit of an equal and mutual passion, Rodolphe was afflicted with an excessive sensibility. From his infancy he had manifested the greatest ardor in everything. In him, desire became a superior force and the mainspring of the whole being, the stimulant of the imagination, the cause of his actions.

In spite of the efforts of an intelligent mother, who was alarmed when she perceived such a predisposition, Rodolphe desired as a poet imagines, as a *savant* calculates, as a painter sketches, as a musician composes melodies. Tender as his mother, he rushed with unheard-of violence and imagination toward the object desired; he devoured time. While dreaming of the accomplishment of his projects, he always passed over the means of execution. 'When my son has children,' said the mother, 'he will want them full grown at once.' This noble ardor, properly directed, enabled Rodolphe to make a brilliant scholar, and to become what the English call a perfect gentleman. His mother was proud of him,

while always dreading some catastrophe if ever a passion took possession of his heart, at once so tender and so sensitive, so violent and so good. Therefore, this prudent woman had encouraged the friendship which bound Léopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Léopold, seeing in the cool and devoted notary a guardian, a confidant, who might replace her to a certain point with Rodolphe, if she should unhappily be taken from him. Still handsome at forty-three, the mother of Rodolphe had inspired Léopold with the most lively affection. This circumstance rendered the young men still more intimate.

"So Léopold, who knew Rodolphe well, was not surprised to see him stopping at a village and giving up the projected excursion to Saint Gothard, for the sake of a glance cast from the top of a house. While their breakfast was being prepared at the Swan Inn, the two friends strolled through the village, and arrived at the part nearest to the charming new house, where, while looking about and chatting with the inhabitants, Rodolphe discovered a family of small tradespeople disposed to take him as a boarder, according to the general custom in Switzerland. They offered him a room with a view of the lake and the mountains, and from which you could catch the magnificent view of one of those prodigious windings which recommend the Lake of the Four Cantons to the admiration of tourists. This house was separated, by an open space and a small harbor, from the new house in which Rodolphe had caught a glimpse of the face of his fair unknown. For a hundred francs a month, Rodolphe was supplied with all the necessaries of life. But, in consideration of the expenses to which the Stopfers would be put, they required the payment of three months in advance. You have only got to rub a Swiss, and the usurer appears.

After breakfast Rodolphe installed himself on the spot, by putting into his room all the things he had brought for his excursion to St. Gothard, and looked down on the departure of Léopold, who, in the spirit of order, was going to perform the excursion on Rodolphe's account and his own. When Rodolphe, seated on a rock fallen on the shore, could no longer see Léopold's boat, he examined, but from below, the new house, hoping to perceive the unknown. Alas! he went in again without the house having shown a sign of life. At the dinner offered him by Monsieur and Madame Stopfer, retired coopers, he questioned them about the neighborhood, and in the end learned all he wanted to know about the unknown, thanks to the chattering of his hosts, who emptied the scandal-bag without much pressing.

The unknown was called Fanny Lovelace. This name, which is pronounced *Loveless*, belongs to several old English families; but Richardson has created one whose celebrity eclipses all the others. Miss Lovelace had come to reside on the lake for her father's health, the doctors having ordered him the air of the canton of Lucerne. These two English people, who had arrived with no other servant but a little girl of fourteen, very much attached to Miss Fanny—a little dumb girl who waited on her very cleverly—had made arrangements, before the last winter, with Monsieur and Madame Bergmann, formerly head gardeners to his excellency Count Borromeo at Isola Bella and Isola Madre, on the Lago Maggiore.

"These Swiss, worth about a thousand crowns a year, let the upper story of their house to the Lovelaces at two hundred francs a year for three years. Old Lovelace, an old man of ninety, very infirm, and too poor to afford certain expenses, seldom went out. His daughter, to support him, translated English books, and, they said, wrote books herself. Thus, the Lovelaces did not venture either to hire boats to go on the lake, or horses, or guides to explore the neighborhood. A poverty which imposed such privations excited the compassion of the Swiss, all the more that they lost an opportunity of profit. The cook of the house provided for the three English at the rate of a hundred francs a month, everything included. But it was believed in Gersau that the former gardeners, despite their preten-

sions to gentility, made use of the name of their cook to realize the profits of this agreement. The Bergmanns had constructed admirable gardens and a magnificent hothouse around their habitation. The flowers, the fruits, and the botanic rareties of this habitation had determined the young *miss* to choose it on her passage through Gersau. They put down at nineteen the age of Miss Fanny, who, being the old man's last child, would naturally be idolized by him. Only two months ago, she had procured a piano on hire which came from Lucerne, for she appeared music mad.

"'She is fond of flowers and music,' thought Rodolphe, 'and she is unmarried? What good fortune!'

"The next day, Rodolphe sent to ask permission to visit the hothouses and gardens, which were beginning to enjoy a certain celebrity. This permission was not granted immediately. These retired gardeners asked, for a wonder, to see Rodolphe's passport, and he sent it immediately. The passport was not returned until the next day, by the cook, who communicated to him that her master would be pleased to show him his establishment.

"Rodolphe did not enter the Bergmanns' without a certain shock, experienced only by people of strong emotions, and who display in a moment as much passion as some men expend in their whole life. Dressed with care to please the old gardeners of the Borromean isles—for he saw in them the guardians of his treasure—he went through the gardens, looking from time to time at the house, but with prudence. The two old proprietors manifested a very visible mistrust. But his attention was soon excited by the little English dumb girl, in whom his sagacity, though still young, recognized a daughter of Africa, or at least a Sicilian. This young girl had the golden tint of an Havanna cigar, eyes of fire, Armenian eyelids, eyelashes of an anti-Britannic length, hair more than black, and, under this almost olive skin, nerves of remarkable strength and febrile vivacity. She cast on Rodolphe searching looks of incredible boldness, and followed his slightest movements.

"'To whom does this little Moor belong?' said he to the respectable Madame Bergmann.

"'To the English people,'' answered Monsieur Bergmann.

"'She certainly was not born in England!'

"'Perhaps they have brought her from India,' replied Madame Bergmann.

"'I have been told that young Miss Lovelace is fond of music. I should be delighted if, during my stay on the lake, to which I am condemned by the doctor's orders, she would allow me to practice with her.'

"'They do not see and do not wish to see anybody,' said the old gardener.

"Rodolphe bit his lips, and went away without having been invited to enter the house, nor taken to that part of the garden situated between the house front and the edge of the promontory. On this side of the house, above the first story, there was a wooden gallery, covered by the roof, which had an excessive projection, like the roof of a châlet, and went all round the four sides of the building, in the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe had greatly praised this elegant construction, and extolled the view from this gallery; but it was all in vain. When he had taken leave of the Bergmanns, he felt himself a fool, like every man of wit and imagination disappointed by the failure of a plan on whose success he had reckoned.

"In the evening he naturally went on the lake in a boat. Coasting the promontory, he went as far as Brunnen and Schwitz, and returned at nightfall. From a distance he perceived the window open and strongly lighted. He could hear the sound of the piano and the accents of a delicious voice. He stopped the boat to abandon himself to the charm of listening to an Italian air divinely sung. When the song had ceased, Rodolphe landed, and dismissed the boat and the boatmen. At the risk of wetting his feet, he went and seated himself under the bank of granite worn away by the waters and crowned by a strong hedge of thorny

acacias, along which an alley of young lime trees stretched into the Bergmanns' garden. At the end of an hour he heard talking and walking above his head, but the words which reached his ear were all Italian, and pronounced by two young female voices. He took advantage of the moment when the two interlocutrices were at one end to reach the other without noise. After half an hour of efforts, he attained the end of the avenue, and, without being seen or heard, succeeded in taking a position from which he could see the two women without being seen by them when they came toward him. What was the astonishment of Rodolphe on recognizing in one of the two women the little dumb girl. She was talking to Miss Lovelace in Italian. It was eleven at night. The stillness on the lake and around the habitation was so profound that the two women might well believe themselves in safety: in all Gersau, only their own eyes would be open. Rodolphe thought the dumbness of the young girl must be a necessary imposition. From the way in which they spoke Italian, Rodolphe guessed that it was the mother tongue of the two, and he concluded that the English disguise must be a stratagem.

"'They are Italian refugees,' said he—'exiles—who, no doubt, are in fear of the Austrian or Sardinian police. The young girl waits till night to be able to walk about and converse in security.'

"Thereupon he threw himself into the hedge, and crawled like a serpent to find a passage between two acacia roots. At the risk of leaving his coat behind him, or seriously hurting his back, he got through the hedge, while the pretended Miss Fanny and her pretended dumb girl were at the other end of the avenue; and then, when they had got to within twenty paces of him without seeing him—for he was in the shadow of the hedge, then strongly lighted up by the moon—he suddenly rose up.

"'Fear nothing,' said he, in French, to the Italian; 'I am no spy. You are refugees. I have guessed it. I myself am a Frenchman, whom a single glance from you has fixed at Gersau.'

"Rodolphe, stung by the pain of some steel instrument piercing his side, fell to the ground.

"'*Nel lago con pietra,*' * said the terrible mute.

"'Ah! Gina,' exclaimed the Italian.

"'She has missed me,' said Rodolphe, withdrawing from the wound a stiletto which had struck against a rib; 'but a little higher, and it would have gone through my heart. I was wrong, Francesca,' said he, remembering the name little Gina had several times pronounced. 'I am not angry with her. Do not scold her; the pleasure of speaking to you is well worth a stiletto-cut; only show me my way. I must return to the Stopfers' house. Be at ease, I will say nothing.'

"Francesca, having recovered from her astonishment, assisted Rodolphe to raise himself, and said some words to Gina, whose eyes filled with tears. The two girls forced Rodolphe to sit down on a bench and take off his coat, waistcoat, and cravat. Gina opened his shirt and violently sucked the wound. Francesca, who had left them, returned with a large piece of sticking-plaster, which she applied to the wound.

"'You will be able to get as far as your house now,' said she.

"Each of them took hold of an arm, and Rodolphe was conducted to a little gate, the key of which happened to be in the pocket of Francesca's apron.

"'Does Gina speak French?' said Rodolphe to Francesca.

"'No; but do not excite yourself,' said Francesca, with a little air of impatience.

"'Let me see you,' replied Rodolphe with emotion, 'for, perhaps, it will be a long while before I can come—'

"He leaned on one of the gate-posts and gazed at the fair Italian, who allowed herself to be looked at for an instant in the deepest silence and the loveliest night that had ever shone on this lake, the king of all Swiss lakes. Francesca was, indeed, the classic Italian, such as the imagination desires, represents, or dreams, if you will, all Italians. What struck

* "Into the lake with a stone."

Rodolphe at once was the elegance and grace of her figure, whose vigor was displayed, despite its apparent frailty, in its elasticity. An amber pallor spread over the face betrayed a sudden interest, which, however, did not efface the voluptuousness of two limpid eyes of velvet blackness. Two hands, the loveliest that ever a Greek sculptor had attached to the polished arm of a statue, held Rodolphe by the arm, and their whiteness was contrasted with the blackness of his coat. The imprudent Frenchman could only just perceive the elongated, oval shape of the face, whose sorrowful and slightly opened mouth disclosed brilliant teeth between two full lips fresh and ruddy. The beauty of the outlines of this face guaranteed to Francesca the durability of its splendor; but what struck Rodolphe most was the adorable unconstraint, the Italian frankness of this girl, who gave herself up entirely to her companion.

"Francesca spoke to Gina, who gave her arm to Rodolphe as far as the Stopfers' house, and fled like a swallow when she had rung the bell.

"'These patriots do not strike with light hands,' said Rodolphe to himself, feeling the pain of his wound when he was alone in bed. '*Nel lago!* Gina would have thrown me into the lake with a stone round my neck!'

"In the morning, he sent to Lucerne for the best surgeon; and when he came, enjoined on him the most profound secrecy, giving him to understand that honor required it. Léopold returned from his excursion the day his friend left his bed. Rodolphe made him up a story, and got him to go to Lucerne for their luggage and letters. Léopold brought back the most fatal, the most terrible news. Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were going from Bâle to Lucerne the fatal letter, written by Léopold's father, had arrived there the day of their departure for Fluelen. In spite of the precautions taken by Léopold, Rodolphe was seized with a nervous fever. As soon as the future notary saw his friend out of danger, he left for France, provided with a power of attorney. Rodolphe was thus enabled to remain at Gersau, the only place in the world where his grief could be calmed. The situation of the young Frenchman, his despair, and the circumstances which rendered this loss more terrible for him than for any other, were known, and drew upon him the compassion and interest of all Gersau. Every morning the sham mute came to see the Frenchman, in order to be able to report to her mistress.

"When Rodolphe was able to go out, he went to the Bergmanns', to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had shown in his affliction and his illness. For the first time since his establishment with the Bergmanns, the old Italian allowed a stranger to penetrate into his apartments, where Rodolphe was received with a cordiality due to his misfortunes and his character of a Frenchman, which precluded all suspicion. Francesca appeared so lovely in the full light during the first evening, that she cast a ray of light on this desponding heart. Her smiles strewed over his mourning the roses of hope. She sang, not gay airs, but grave and sublime melodies appropriate to the state of Rodolphe's heart, and he remarked this touching consideration. About eight o'clock, the old man left the two young people alone, without any appearance of distrust, and retired to his own room. When Francesca was tired of singing, she took Rodolphe to the exterior gallery, from which the sublime view of the lake was visible, and made a sign to him to sit down by her side on a rustic wood seat.

"'Would it be impertinent to ask your age, *cara* Francesca?" said Rodolphe.

"'Nineteen,' she answered.

"'If anything in the world could lessen my grief,' continued he, 'it would be the hope of obtaining you from your father, whatever may be the state of your fortune. Lovely as you are, you seem to me richer than the daughter of a prince, and I tremble in avowing the sentiments with which you have inspired me; but they are profound—they are eternal.'

"'*Zitto*,' said Francesca, putting one of the fingers of her right hand on her

lips. 'Do not go any further. I am not free; I have been married three years.'

"A profound silence reigned for some instants between them. When the Italian, alarmed at the attitude of Rodolphe, drew nearer to him, she found he had fainted away.

"'*Povero!*' she said to herself, 'and I thought he was cold!'

"She went to get her salts, and restored Rodolphe by making him inhale them.

"'Married!' said Rodolphe, looking at Francesca. His tears fell in abundance.

"'Child,' said she, 'there is hope. My husband is—'

"'Eighty?' said Rodolphe.

"'No,' she replied, smiling; 'sixty-five. He put on the mask of age to deceive the police.'

"'Dear one,' said Rodolphe, 'a few more emotions like this, and I must die. Only after twenty years of acquaintance will you know the strength and power of my heart, and the nature of its aspirations after happiness. This plant does not shoot up with more eagerness to blossom in the rays of the sun,' said he, pointing to a Virginian jessamine which covered the balustrade, 'than I have become attached for the last month to you. I love you with an unequaled love. This love will be the secret spring of my life, and perhaps I shall die of it.'

"'Oh, Frenchman! Frenchman!' said she, commenting his exclamation with a little grimace of incredulity.

"'Must I not wait for you, and receive you from the hands of time?' continued he with gravity. 'But know this: if you are sincere in the words which have escaped you, I will wait for you faithfully, without allowing any other sentiment to spring up in my heart.'

"She looked at him slyly.

"'Nothing,' said he, 'not even a fancy. I have got my fortune to make; it must be a splendid one, for your sake. Nature had created you a princess—'

"At this word Francesca could not restrain a faint smile, which gave a most charming expression to her countenance, a something artful, which the great Leonardo has so well depicted in his 'Joconde.' This smile made Rodolphe pause.

"'Yes,' resumed he, 'you must suffer from the privations to which exile has reduced you. Ah! if you would render me the happiest of men, and sanctify my love, you would have me as a friend. Have I not a right to be your friend? My poor mother has left me her savings of sixty thousand francs; accept half of them.'

"Francesca looked at him steadily. This piercing glance went to the bottom of Rodolphe's soul.

"We are not in want of anything; my work provides our luxuries,' replied she, in a grave voice.

"'Can I allow Francesca to work?' cried he. 'Some day you will return to your country, and you will recover all you have left behind you.' Again the young Italian looked at Rodolphe. 'And you will repay me what you have deigned to borrow of me,' added he, with a look full of delicacy.

"'Let us quit this subject of conversation,' said she, with an incomparable nobility of gesture, of look, and of attitude. 'Make a brilliant fortune; be one of the remarkable men of your country; I desire it. Glory is a flying bridge which may serve to cross an abyss. Be ambitious—you must. I believe you have noble and powerful abilities, but employ them rather for the good of humanity than to obtain me; you will be greater in my eyes.'

"During this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered in Francesca the enthusiasm for liberal ideas and the worship of liberty which had produced the triple revolution of Naples, Piedmont, and Spain. On leaving, he was conducted to the gate by Gina, the sham mute. At eleven o'clock nobody was about in the village; no indiscretion was to be feared. Rodolphe drew Gina into a corner, and asked her softly, in bad Italian—

"'Who are your masters, my girl? Tell me, and I will give you this bright new piece of gold.'

"'Sir,' replied the girl, taking the coin, 'master is the famous bookseller, Lam-

porani of Milan, one of the chiefs of the revolution—the conspirator Austria would most like to have in the Spielberg.'

"'The wife of a bookseller? Ah! so much the better,' thought he; 'we are on a level. And to what family does she belong?' continued he, aloud, 'for she has the air of a queen.'

"'All the Italian women are like that,' answered Gina, proudly. 'Her father's name is Colonna.'

"Emboldened by the humble condition of Francesca, Rodolphe had an awning put to his boat and some cushions in the stern. When this alteration was effected, Rodolphe came and proposed to Francesca an excursion on the lake. The Italian accepted, no doubt to keep up her character of a young miss in the eyes of the village; but she took Gina.

"The slightest actions of Francesca Colonna betrayed a superior education and the highest social rank. From the manner in which the Italian seated herself at the end of the boat, Rodolphe felt to some extent separated from her, and his premeditated familiarities dropped before the expression of the true pride of nobility. By a look, Francesca created herself a princess, with all the privileges she would have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. She seemed to have guessed the secret thoughts of this vassal who had the audacity to constitute himself her protector. Already, in the furniture of the salon in which Francesca had received him, in her dress, and in the most trifling articles she made use of, Rodolphe had recognized the indications of a lofty nature and a high fortune. All these observations recurred at once to his memory, and he became pensive after having been, so to speak, repulsed by the dignity of Francesca. Gina, her scarcely adolescent confidante, seemed to wear a mocking expression while looking aside or stealthily at Rodolphe. This visible discordance between the condition and the manners of the Italian was a new enigma to Rodolphe, who suspected some fresh trick, like the sham dumbness of Gina.

"'Where would you like to go, *Signora Lamporani?*' said he.

"'To Lucerne,' answered Francesca, in French.

"'Good!' thought Rodolphe. 'She is not surprised at hearing me mention her name. She had, no doubt, anticipated my question to Gina, the cunning one! What have I done to offend you?' said he at length, coming to seat himself by her, and seeking by a gesture a hand which Francesca withdrew. 'You are cold and ceremonious—what we should call, in conversation, *cutting*.'

"'It is true,' replied she, smiling; 'I am wrong. It is not right; it is vulgar. You would say in French it is not artistic. It is better to explain one's self than to keep up hostile or cold feelings toward a friend; and you have already proved your friendship. Perhaps I have gone too far with you. You must have taken me for a very common person.'

"Rodolphe made repeated signs of denial.

"'Yes,' said this bookseller's wife, continuing without taking any notice of the pantomime, which, however, she saw well enough; 'I have perceived it, and, naturally, I have drawn back. Well, I will put an end to it all by a few words of profound truth. Be well assured, Rodolphe; I feel in myself the strength to stifle a sentiment which would not be in harmony with the ideas or the prescience I have of real love. I can love as we know how to love in Italy; but I know my duty. No intoxication will make me forget it. Married without my own consent to this poor old man, I might avail myself of the liberty he leaves me with so much generosity; but three years of marriage are equivalent to an acceptance of conjugal faith, and the most violent passion would not make me express, even involuntarily, a desire to be free. Emilio knows my character. He knows that, except my heart, which belongs to me and which I can dispose of, I would not allow my hand to be touched. That is why I have just refused it to you. I must be loved, awaited with fidelity, nobility, and ardor, while according nothing but an infinite tenderness, whose expression must not exceed the limits of the heart—the privileged ground.

All these things well understood—oh!' continued she, with a girlish gesture, 'then I will be coquettish, laughing, and playful as a child who does not know the danger of familiarity.'

"This declaration, perfectly frank and clear, was made in a tone, and with an accent, and accompanied by looks which stamped it with the most profound truth.

"'A Princess Colonna could not have spoken better,' said Rodolphe, with a smile.

"'Is that,' said she, with a haughty air, 'a reproach on the lowness of my birth? Does your love require a coat-of-arms? In Milan the greatest names, Sforza, Canova Visconti, Trivalzio, Ursini, are written up over the shops; there are Archintos apothecaries; but, believe that, in spite of my condition as a shopkeeper, I have the feelings of a duchess.'

"'A reproach? No, madame; I intended it for a compliment.'

"'By comparison?' said she, archly.

"'Ah! believe me,' resumed he, 'and torment me no longer. If my words do not properly express my feelings, my love is absolute, and comprises infinite obedience and respect.'

"She inclined her head as if satisfied, and said, 'You accept the treaty, then?'

"'Yes,' said he. 'I comprehend that, in a rich and powerful feminine organization, the faculty of loving cannot be lost, and that you would restrain it from delicacy. Ah, Francesca, a mutual passion, at my age and with a mistress so sublime, so regally lovely as you, is the accomplishment of all my hopes. To love you as you desire to be loved, is it not a safeguard for a young man against all base follies? Is it not throwing his energies into a noble passion, of which hereafter he may be proud, and which will leave him only fair memories? If you knew with what colors, with what poesy you have just clothed the mountains of Pilatus and the Rigi, and this magnificent basin—'

"'I wish to know it,' said she, with an Italian simplicity which is always backed by a little slyness.

"'Well, then, this hour will cast its radiance over my whole life, like a diamond on the brow of a queen.'

"As her only answer, Francesca placed her hand in that of Rodolphe.

"'Oh, dearest, ever dearest, say you have never loved!'

"'Never!'

"'And you permit me to love you nobly, awaiting all from Heaven?' he asked.

"She gently lowered her head. Two large tears rolled down Rodolphe's cheeks.

"'Well, what ails you?' said she, dropping her imperial character.

"'I have no longer a mother to tell how happy I am. She has quitted the earth without seeing what would have soothed her last moments.'

"'What?' said she.

"'Her love replaced by an equal love.'

'*Povero mio!*' exclaimed the Italian with emotion. 'Believe me,' she resumed, after a pause, 'it is a very delightful thing, and a very great element of fidelity, for a woman to know that she is everything on earth to the man she loves; to see him alone, without family, with nothing in his heart but his love; in short, to have him all to herself.'

"When two lovers understand each other so well, the heart experiences a delicious quietude, a sublime tranquillity. Certainty is the base required by human sentiments, for it is never wanting to religious sentiment: man is always certain of being requited by God. Love only believes itself in safety through this likeness to Divine love; and you must have fully experienced them to comprehend the delights of this moment, always unique in a life. It returns no more, alas! than the emotions of youth. To believe in a woman; to make her your religion on earth, the spring of your life, the secret luminary of your least thoughts — is it not to be born a second time? A young man then mingles with his love some of that he feels for his mother. Rodolphe and Francesca for some time kept profound silence, answering each other in soft looks full of thought. They sympathized with each other in the midst of one of the finest spectacles of Nature,

whose richness, explained by that of their own hearts, enabled them to engrave on their memories the most fugitive impressions of this unique hour. There had not been the slightest appearance of coquetry in the conduct of Francesca. Everything was noble, grand, and without reserve. This grandeur forcibly struck Rodolphe, who recognized in it the difference which distinguishes the Italian from the French woman. The waters, the earth, the heavens, the woman, all was grandiose and placid, even their love, in the midst of this picture, vast in its extent, rich in its details, and in which the sharpness of the snowy peaks, their rigid forms clearly marked upon the azure, recalled to Rodolphe the conditions to which his happiness was to be confined: a rich country surrounded by snow.

"This soft intoxication of the soul was to be disturbed. A boat was coming from Lucerne. Gina, who had been looking attentively at it for some time, made a sign of joy, remaining faithful to her character of a mute. The boat came near, and when at last Francesca was able to see the faces in it, 'Tito!' she cried, perceiving a young man. She got up and remained standing, at the risk of being drowned. 'Tito, Tito!' she cried, waving her handkerchief.

"Tito ordered his boatmen to row, and the two boats went on in the same direction. The Italian and Tito talked with so much vivacity, in a dialect so unknown to a man who scarcely knew book Italian and had never been in Italy, that Rodolphe could neither understand nor guess at any part of this conversation. The beauty of Tito, the familiarity of Francesca, the joyous air of Gina, all displeased him. Besides, a man is not in love if he does not feel annoyed at seeing himself left for another, whoever it may be. Tito smartly threw a little leather bag, no doubt full of gold, to Gina, and then a packet of letters to Francesca, who began to read them, making a sign of adieu to Tito.

"'Turn back immediately to Gersau,' said she to the boatmen; 'I must not leave my poor Emilio to pine ten minutes more than I can help.'

"'What has happened to you?' asked Rodolphe, when he saw the Italian finishing her last letter.

"'*La libertà!*" cried she, with the enthusiasm of an artist.

"'*E denaro!*' answered like an echo Gina, who was able to speak at last.

"'Yes,' resumed Francesca, 'no more misery! It is eleven months now that I have had to work, and I was beginning to get tired of it. Decidedly I am not a literary character.'

"'What is this Tito?' said Rodolphe.

"'The secretary of state of the financial department of the poor business of Colonna, otherwise called the son of our *ragjonato*. Poor fellow! he could not get to us by the Saint Gothard, nor by Mont Cenis, nor by the Simplon; he came by sea, by Marseille. He had to cross all through France. In short, in three weeks we shall be at Geneva and living at our ease. Come, Rodolphe,' said she, seeing the sadness spread over the face of the Parisian, 'is not the Lake of Geneva as good as the Lake of the Four Cantons?'

"'Permit me to bestow a regret on this delicious house of the Bergmanns,' said Rodolphe, pointing to the promontory.

"'You must come and dine with us, to multiply your souvenirs, *povero mio*,' said she. 'It is a *fête* to-day. We are no longer in danger; my mother tells me that in a year, perhaps, we shall be amnestied. *Oh, la cara patria!*'

"These three words set Gina crying. 'Another winter here and I should have been dead!' she said.

"'Poor little child of Sicily,' said Francesca, placing her hand on Gina's head with a gesture and an affection which made Rodolphe long to be so caressed, although it was without love.

"The boat came ashore; Rodolphe leaped on to the sand, held out his hand to the Italian, accompanied her to the gate of the Bergmanns' house, and went home to dress, so as to get back the sooner.

"Finding the bookseller and his wife sitting in the outer gallery, Rodolphe with difficulty repressed a start of surprise at the sight of the prodigious change the

good news had worked in the man of ninety. He saw before him a man of about sixty, perfectly well preserved; a spare Italian, straight as an I, his hair still black, though scanty, and disclosing a white scalp, fiery eyes, white and perfect teeth, the face of a Cæsar and a diplomatic mouth, with a half-sardonic smile — the nearly always false smile under which a well-bred man conceals his true sentiments.

"'Here is my husband in his natural shape,' said Francesca, gravely.

"'It is quite a new acquaintance,' replied Rodolphe at a nonplus.

"'Quite,' said the bookseller. 'I have acted on the stage, and I can play the old man perfectly. Ah! I used to play at Paris, in the time of the empire, with Bourienne, Madame Murat, Madame d'Abrantes, *è tutti quanti*. Everything one has taken the trouble to learn in one's youth, even the most frivolous things, may turn out useful. If my wife had not received a masculine education, which is a contradiction in Italy, I should have had to turn wood-cutter for a living here. *Povera* Francesca! who could have told me that some day she would support me?'

"Listening to this worthy bookseller, so easy, so affable, and so lively, Rodolphe suspected some mystification, and maintained the watchful silence of a man who has been duped.

"'*Che avete, signor?*' Francesca archly asked him. 'Does our happiness distress you?'

"'Your husband is a young man,' he whispered in her ear.

"She burst into a fit of laughter, so frank and so catching that Rodolphe was all the more dumfounded.

"'He is only sixty-five, at your service,' said she; 'but still, I assure you, that is something reassuring.'

"'I do not like to hear you joking about a love so sacred as that whose conditions you have fixed yourself.'

"'*Zitto!*' said she, stamping her foot and looking whether her husband was listening to them. 'Never disturb the peace of this man who is dear to me, as open as a child, and with whom I do as I like. He is under my protection,' she added. 'If you knew with what nobility he risked his life and his fortune, because I was a Liberal! For he does not share my political opinions. Is that loving, Mister Frenchman? But they are like that in their family. The younger brother of Emilio was deceived by the woman he loved, for a charming young man. He ran his sword through his heart, and ten minutes previously he said to his valet, "I could easily kill my rival, but that would give too much pain to *la diva*."'

"This combination of nobility and jesting, of grandeur and childishness, made Francesca at this moment the most attractive creature in the world. The dinner, as well as the evening, was stamped with a gayety justified by the deliverance of the two refugees, but which grieved Rodolphe.

"'Can she be a trifler?' he said to himself on returning to the Stopfers' house. 'She sympathized with my grief, and I—I cannot espouse her joy.' He blamed himself, and justified this young girl-wife. 'She is without the slightest hypocrisy, and gives way to her impressions,' he said to himself, 'and I would have her like a Parisian!'

"The next and the following days—for three weeks, in fact—Rodolphe passed all his time at the Bergmanns' house, observing Francesca without having intended to observe her. Admiration, in certain characters, is not unaccompanied by a sort of penetration. The young Frenchman recognized in Francesca an imprudent young girl, the true woman's nature still untamed, struggling at some moments with her love, and at other moments giving way to it. The old man behaved to her as a father to his child, and Francesca showed him a deeply felt gratitude which revealed an instinctive nobility. This situation and this woman presented to Rodolphe an impenetrable enigma, whose solution more and more strongly attracted him.

"These last days were full of secret *fêtes*, mingled with melancholy—of ruptures and quarrels more charming than the hours when Rodolphe and Francesca

were perfectly agreed. In short, he was more and more captivated by the charm of this unreasoning affection always consistent with itself, by this love jealous of a shadow—already!

"'You are very fond of luxury,' said he, one evening, to Francesca, who had manifested a desire to leave Gersau, where many things were wanting.

"'I!' said she. 'I like luxury as I like art—as I like a picture of Raphael's, a fine horse, a fine day, or the Bay of Naples.—Emilio,' said she, 'have I ever complained during our days of distress here?'

"'You would not have been yourself,' said the old bookseller, gravely.

"'After all, is it not natural for shopkeepers to long for greatness?' continued she, darting a mischievous glance both at Rodolphe and her husband. 'My feet,' said she, putting out two charming little feet—'are they made for enduring fatigue? My hands'—she stretched out a hand to Rodolphe—'are these hands made for hard work? Leave us,' said she to her husband; 'I want to speak to him.'

"The old man went into the salon with sublime good nature; he was sure of his wife.

"'I do not wish you,' said she to Rodolphe, 'to accompany us to Geneva. Geneva is a city of scandals. Although I am far above the tittle-tattle of society, I will not be calumniated—not for my own sake, but for *his*. I make it my pride to be the glory of this old man, my only protector after all. We are going to leave. You remain here for some days. When you come to Geneva, make acquaintance with my husband first, and let him introduce you to me. Let us hide our unchangeable and profound affection from the eyes of the world. I love you. You know it; and this is how I will prove it: you shall never discover in my conduct the slightest thing that could arouse your jealousy.'

"She drew him into the corner of the gallery, took him by the head, kissed him on the forehead, and disappeared, leaving him stupefied.

"The next day, Rodolphe learned that the inmates of the Bergmanns' house had left at the break of day. From that moment, residence at Gersau appeared unsupportable, and he started for Vevay by the longest road, traveling faster than he ought to have done; but, attracted by the waters of the lake where the fair Italian awaited him, he arrived about the end of October at Geneva. To avoid the inconveniences of the city, he lodged in a house situated at Eaux-Vives, outside the ramparts. Once installed, his first care was to ask his host, a retired jeweler, if some Italian refugees from Milan had not lately come to stay at Geneva.

"'Not that I know of,' his host told him. 'The Prince and Princess Colonna of Rome have taken the residence of Monsieur Jeanrenaud, one of the finest on the lake, for three years. It is situated between the Villa Diodati and the residence of Monsieur Lafin de Dieu, which is let to the Vicomtesse de Beauseant. Prince Colonna has taken it for his daughter and his son-in-law, Prince Gandolphini, a Neapolitan or Sicilian, if you like, a former partisan of King Murat and a victim of the last revolution. These are the last arrivals at Geneva, and they are not Milanese. It required strong interest and the protection accorded by the Pope to the Colonna family, to obtain from the foreign powers and the king of Naples permission for the Prince and Princess Gandolphini to reside here. Geneva will not do anything to displease the Holy Alliance, to which she owes her independence. Our part is not to offend foreign courts. There are a great many foreigners here—Russians, English.'

"'There are even Genevese.'

"'Yes, sir. Our lake is so fine! Lord Byron lived here about seven years ago, at the Villa Diodati, which everybody goes to see now, like Coppet and Ferney.'

"'Could you not ascertain whether, during the last week, a bookseller of Milan and his wife, named Lamporani, one of the chiefs of the last revolution, have come here?'

"'I can ascertain by going to the strangers' club,' said the retired jeweler.

"Rodolphe's first excursion was naturally to the Villa Diodati, the residence of Lord Byron, which the recent death of the great poet had endowed with still more attraction. Is not death the consecration of genius? The road which from Eaux-Vives follows the shores of the Lake of Geneva is, like all the roads in Switzerland, rather narrow, and in certain places, owing to the rocky nature of the ground, there is scarcely room enough left for the carriages to pass. At some paces from the Jeanrenauds' house, close to which he had arrived without knowing it, Rodolphe heard behind him the noise of a carriage, and, finding himself in a species of gorge, he climbed on to the point of a rock to leave a free passage. Naturally, he looked at the carriage coming toward him, an elegant *calèche* drawn by two magnificent English horses. He was thunderstruck at seeing, at the back of this *calèche,* Francesca, divinely dressed, by the side of an old lady as stiff as a cameo. A chasseur, dazzling with gold, was holding on behind the carriage. Francesca recognized Rodolphe, and smiled at finding him there, perched like a statue on its pedestal. The carriage, which the lover was enabled to follow with his eyes by climbing the height, turned to enter the gate of a country house, to which he ran.

"'Who lives here?' he asked the gardener.

"'The Prince and Princess Colonna, as well as the Prince and Princess Gandolphini.'

"'Is it not they who have just gone in?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"In a moment the veil fell from the eyes of Rodolphe; he saw through the past clearly.

"'Provided,' said the thunderstruck lover to himself, 'that this is her last mystification!'

"He trembled lest he should have been the plaything of a caprice, for he had heard speak of what a *cappriccio* is to an Italian. But what a crime in the eyes of a woman, to have treated as a shopkeeper a princess of princely birth—to have taken the daughter of one of the most illustrious families of the Middle Ages for the wife of a bookseller! The consciousness of his faults redoubled Rodolphe's desire to know whether he would be disowned, repulsed. He asked for the Prince Gandolphini, sending up his card, and was immediately received by the sham Lamporani, who came to meet him, and welcomed him with perfect grace, with Neapolitan affability, and took him on to a terrace from which you could see Geneva, the Jura and its slopes studded with villas, and, beyond, the shores of the lake to a wide extent.

"'My wife is faithful to lakes, you see,' said he, after having described the country to his guest. 'We have a sort of concert to-night,' added he, returning toward the magnificent house of Jeanrenaud; 'I hope you will do the princess and myself the pleasure of coming. Two months of misery gone through together are equal to years of friendship.'

"Although devoured by curiosity, Rodolphe did not venture to ask to see the princess; he returned slowly to Eaux-Vives, thinking of the evening. In a few hours, his love, however immense already, was aggrandized by his anxiety and by the expectation of coming events. He understood now the necessity of becoming illustrious, to raise himself to the height, socially speaking, of his idol. Francesca appeared very grand in his eyes from the unaffectedness and simplicity of her conduct at Gersau. The naturally haughty air of the Princess Colonna dismayed Rodolphe, who would have the father and mother of Francesca for enemies—at least, he must expect it: and the mystery the Princess Gandolphini had so strongly impressed upon him now appeared an admirable proof of affection. By taking precautions for the future, did not Francesca clearly say that she loved Rodolphe?

"At last nine o'clock struck; Rodolphe was able to get into a carriage and say, with an emotion easy to understand, 'To

the Jeanrenauds' house, the Prince Gandolphini's!'

"'At last he entered the salon, full of foreigners of the highest distinction, and where he remained of necessity among a group near the door—for at the moment they were singing a duet from Rossini.

"'At last he could see Francesca, but without being seen by her. The princess was standing two steps from the piano. Her marvelous hair, so long and so abundant, was confined in a circlet of gold. Her face, lighted up by the candles, was radiant with the whiteness peculiar to the Italians, and which only produces its full effect by candlelight. She was in ball dress, exposing to admiration her charming shoulders, the figure of a young girl, and the arms of an antique statue. Her sublime beauty was beyond all possible rivalry, although there were present some charming English and Russians, the prettiest women of Geneva, and some other Italians, among whom shone the illustrious Princess of Varese and the famous singer Tinti, who was singing at the moment.

"Rodolphe, leaning against the doorway, gazed at the princess, darting at her that fixed, persistent, and attractive glance charged with the whole power of the human will concentrated in the sentiment called *desire*, but which then assumes the character of a violent commandment. Did the fire of this glance reach Francesca? Was Francesca expecting every moment to see Rodolphe? At the end of a few minutes she cast a glance toward the door, as if attracted by this current of love, and her eyes, without hesitation, encountered the eye of Rodolphe. A slight shudder agitated this magnificent face and this splendid frame. The mental shock had its reaction; Francesca blushed. Rodolphe lived, as it were, a whole life in this exchange, so rapid that it can only be compared to a flash of lightning. But what can compare with his happiness? He was beloved! The sublime princess kept, in the face of the world, in the splendid *Maison Jeanrenaud*, the promise given by the poor exile, the capricious girl of the *Maison Bergmann*. The intoxication of such a moment renders a man a slave for life! A sly smile, elegant and artful, frank and triumphant, agitated the lips of the Princess Gandolphini, who, at a moment when she thought herself unobserved, gave Rodolphe a look which seemed to beg his pardon for having deceived him as to her station. When the piece was finished, Rodolphe was able to get to the prince, who graciously conducted him to his wife. Rodolphe went through the ceremony of an official presentation to the Prince and Princess Colonna and Francesca. When this was over, the princess had to take part in the famous *quatuor* 'Mi manca la voce,' which was executed by her, by Tinti, by Genovese the famous tenor, and by a celebrated Italian prince then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been a prince, would have made him one of the princes of art.

"'Sit down there,' said Francesca to Rodolphe, pointing to her own chair. '*Oimé!* I am afraid there is a mistake in the names; for the last few moments I have been the Princess Rodolphini.'

"This was said with a grace, a charm, a simplicity, which recalled by this avowal, cloaked in a jest, the happy days of Gersau. Rodolphe experienced the delicious sensation of listening to the voice of the woman he adored, and being so near to her that his cheek was almost brushed by the stuff of her dress and the gauze of her scarf. But when at such a moment, 'Mi manca la voce' is being sung, and this quartet is executed by the finest voices of Italy, it is easy to understand how tears came to moisten Rodolphe's eyes.

"In love, as in everything else perhaps, there are certain facts, infinitesimal in themselves, but the result of a thousand trifling circumstances anterior, and whose significance becomes immense when referred to the past and connected with the future. You have felt a thousand times the worth of the person beloved; but a trifle—the perfect union of the kindred souls during a promenade by a word, by an unexpected *proof* of love—carries the sentiment to its highest degree. In short,

to explain this moral fact by an image which, from the first ages of the world, has had the most incontestable success, there are, in a long chain, necessary points of junction, at which the cohesion is stronger than in the series of rings. This recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca during this evening, in the face of the world, was one of those supreme points which connect the future with the past, which rivet more strongly on the heart real attachments. Perhaps it was of these sparse rivets that Bossuet spoke, when he compared to them the rarity of the happy moments of our life—he whose love was so ardent and so secret.

"Next to the pleasure of admiring the beloved object comes that of seeing her admired by all. Rodolphe enjoyed them both at once. Love is a treasure of recollections, and although that of Rodolphe was already full, he added to it some precious pearls — smiles bestowed aside on him alone, furtive glances, inflections of voice in singing which Francesca created for him, but which made the Tinti pale with jealousy, so much were they applauded. Accordingly, all his power of desire, the special feature of his character, was concentrated on the lovely Roman, who became unalterably the source and the object of all his thoughts and all his actions. Rodolphe loved as all women dream of being loved, with a strength, a constancy, a cohesion, which made of Francesca the very substance of his heart. He felt her mingled with his blood as a purer blood, with his soul as a more perfect soul. She would henceforth underlie the slightest efforts of his life, like the golden sand of the Mediterranean under the water. In short, the slightest aspiration of Rodolphe was an active hope.

"At the end of a few days Francesca admitted this immense love; but it was so natural, so thoroughly mutual, that she was not surprised at it. She was worthy of it.

"'What is there surprising,' said she to Rodolphe, while walking with him on the terrace of her garden, after having surprised one of those movements of self-conceit so natural to the French in the expression of their sentiments—'what is there marvelous in your loving a young and beautiful woman, who is *artiste* enough to be able to earn her living like the Tinti, and who is able to gratify your vanity? Where is the boor who would not become an Amadis? But that is not the question between us. What you have got to do is to love with constancy, with persistence, and at a distance for years, with no other pleasure than that of knowing yourself beloved.'

"'Alas!' said Rodolphe, 'will you not consider my fidelity destitute of merit, seeing me absorbed by the toils of a devouring ambition? Do you think I should be willing to see you exchange some day the grand name of the Princess Gandolphini for that of an unknown man? I shall strive to become one of the most celebrated men of my country, to be rich, to be great, so that you may be as proud of my name as of your own name of Colonna.'

"'I should be very sorry not to see you with these sentiments in your heart,' she answered, with a charming smile. 'But do not wear yourself out with the labors of ambition. Keep young. They say that politics soon make a man old.'

"The rarest quality in women is a certain gayety which does not diminish their tenderness. This mingling of a profound sentiment with the gayety of youth added at this moment adorable attractions to Francesca. Here is the key to her character. She laughs and grows tender; she gets excited, and returns to delicate raillery with an impulsiveness and an ease which constitute her the charming and delicious person whose reputation, indeed, has spread far beyond Italy; she conceals under her feminine graces a profound erudition, due to the extremely monotonous and almost monastic life she led in the old castle of the Colonnas. This rich heiress was originally destined to the cloister, being the fourth child of the Prince and Princess Colonna, but the death of her two brothers and her elder sisters suddenly drew her from her seclusion to be one of the best matches in the

Roman States. Her elder sister having been affianced to the Prince Gandolphini, one of the richest landowners of Sicily, Francesca was given to him so as not to interfere with family arrangements. The Colonnas and the Gandolphinis had always intermarried. From nine to sixteen, Francesca, educated by a monsignore of the family, had read the whole library of the Colonnas, to keep her ardent imagination occupied by the study of science, art, and literature. But she acquired, in the course of these studies, that taste for independence and liberal ideas which made her throw herself, as well as her husband, into the revolution. Rodolphe did not yet know that, without counting five living languages, Francesca knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. This charming creature had admirably comprehended that one of the first conditions of erudition in a woman is to keep it carefully concealed.

"Rodolphe remained the whole winter at Geneva. This winter passed like a day. When the spring arrived, notwithstanding the exquisite delight arising from the society of a woman of talent, prodigiously learned, young, and lively, the lover underwent cruel sufferings, supported, however, with courage, but which sometimes showed themselves on his physiognomy, which peeped out in his manners and conversation, perhaps because he did not think they were shared by her. At times he was irritated while admiring the calmness of Francesca, who, like the English, seemed to take a pride in allowing no expression to appear on her face, whose serenity defied love. He would have had her agitated. He accused her of having no feeling, believing in the prejudice which ascribes to the Italian women a feverish excitability.

"'I am a Roman,' Francesca gravely answered him one day, taking seriously some of Rodolphe's jesting on this subject.

"There was a depth in the accent of this answer which gave it the appearance of a fierce irony, and made Rodolphe's heart beat. The month of May displayed the treasures of its youthful verdure; the sun at times had as much strength as in the middle of the summer. The two lovers were then leaning on a stone balustrade which, at a part of the terrace where the ground is perpendicular to the lake, surmounts the wall of a staircase by which you descend to get into a boat. From the neighboring villa, which has a nearly similar landing-place, glided out, like a swan, a yawl, with its flaming flag, its pavilion with crimson canopy, beneath which a charming woman was indolently seated on red cushions, with fresh flowers in her hair, accompanied by a young man dressed like a sailor, who rowed with all the more grace that he was under the eyes of this woman.

"'They are happy!' said Rodolphe, with a bitter accent. 'Claire de Bourgogne, the last of the only house that could rival the house of France—'

"'Oh, she is of a bastard branch; and, besides, through the women—'

"'At all events, she is the Vicomtesse de Beauseant, and did not—'

"'Hesitate, you mean, to bury herself with Monsieur Gaston de Nueil,' said the daughter of the Colonnas. 'She is only a Frenchwoman, and I am an Italian, my dear sir.'

"Francesca quitted the balustrade, leaving Rodolphe there, and went to the end of the terrace, from which an immense extent of the lake is embraced. Seeing her walk slowly, Rodolphe had a suspicion that he had wounded this spirit, innocent but not ignorant, at once so proud and so humble. He turned cold. He followed Francesca, who signed to him to leave her alone; but he took no notice of the admonition, and surprised her in the act of drying her tears. Tears from such a resolute nature!

"'Francesca,' said he, taking her hand, 'is there a single regret in your heart?'

"She kept silence, and disengaged her hand, in which she held her embroidered handkerchief, to dry her eyes again.

"'Pardon me,' he went on; and, with a sudden impulse, he put his lips to her eyes to stop her tears with his kisses.

"Francesca was not even aware of this

passionate movement, so violently was she agitated. Rodolphe, believing in her compliance, grew bolder; he seized Francesca by the waist, pressed her to his heart, and snatched a kiss. But she disengaged herself by a magnificent movement of offended modesty, and at two steps off, looking at him without anger, but with resolution—'Leave here to-night,' she said; 'we shall not see each other again before Naples.'

"Notwithstanding the severity of this order, it was religiously executed, for Francesca desired it.

"On his return to Paris, Rodolphe found awaiting him the portrait of the Princess Gandolphini, done by Schinner, as Schinner can paint portraits. This artist had passed through Geneva on his way to Italy. As he had positively refused to take the portraits of several women, Rodolphe did not believe that the prince, who was excessively desirous of his wife's portrait, would be able to vanquish the repugnance of the celebrated painter; but Francesca had, no doubt, fascinated him, and obtained from him what was almost a prodigy—an original portrait for Rodolphe and a copy for Emilio. This is what he learned from a charming and delicious letter, in which imagination made itself amends for the restraint imposed by the religion of conventionality. The lover answered it. Thus began an uninterrupted correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca, the only pleasure they allowed themselves.

"Rodolphe, the prey of an ambition legitimized by his love, immediately set to work. He sought fortune in the first place, and embarked in an enterprise into which he threw all his abilities and all his capital; but he had to struggle with the inexperience of youth against a duplicity which triumphed over him. Three years were lost in a vast enterprise—three years of effort and courage.

"The Villele ministry succumbed at the same time as Rodolphe. Immediately, the intrepid lover resolved to demand from politics what business had refused him; but before venturing into the storms of this carreer, he went, wounded and suffering, to have his wounds healed and renew his courage, to Naples, where the Prince and Princess Gandolphini had been recalled and restored to their property on the accession of the king. In the middle of his struggle it was a repose full of bliss. He passed three months at the Villa Gandolphini, cradled in hope.

"Rodolphe recommenced the edifice of his fortune. Already his talents had been remarked; he was about, at last, to realize the hopes of his ambition. A post of eminence had been promised to his zeal, as a recompense for his devotion and for services rendered, when the storm of July, 1830, broke out and his bark foundered again.

"She and God—these are the only witnesses of the most courageous efforts and the most audacious attempts of a young man endowed with abilities, but to whom, hitherto, the aid of the providence of fools, good luck, has been denied; and this indefatigable athlete, sustained by love, is about to recommence fresh combats, lighted on by a ray of affection and a constant heart! Lovers, pray for him!"

On finishing this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville felt her cheeks on fire; fever was in her veins. She wept, but with rage. This tale, inspired by the literature of the day, was the first piece of reading of the kind that Rosalie had been permitted to devour. Love was painted in it—if not with the hand of a master, at least by a man who appeared to relate his own impressions; and the truth, even unskillfully told, must always touch a virgin heart. This was the secret of the terrible agitation, of the fever and the tears of Rosalie: she was jealous of Francesca Colonna. She did not doubt the sincerity of this poem. Albert had taken a pleasure in relating the birth of his passion, while concealing, no doubt, the names, and perhaps the places. Rosalie was seized with an infernal curiosity. What woman would not, like her, have wished to know the real name of her rival? For she loved! In reading these pages, contagious to her, she had said to

herself the solemn word, "I love!" She loved Albert, and she felt in her heart a gnawing desire to dispute him, to snatch him away from this unknown rival. She reflected that she did not know music, and that she was not handsome.

"He will never love me," she said to herself. This word redoubled her desire to know whether she was not mistaken—if Albert really loved an Italian princess, and was loved by her. During this fatal night, the spirit of rapid decision which distinguished the famous Watteville developed itself undiminished in his heiress. She conceived some of those extravagant plans around which, indeed, hovers the imagination of all young girls, when, in the midst of the solitude to which they are confined by imprudent mothers, they are excited by a capital event which the system of compression to which they have been subjected has not been able to foresee or to prevent. She thought of descending with a ladder, by the kiosk, into the garden of the house in which Albert lived—of taking advantage of the advocate's sleep to look through his window into the interior of his cabinet. She thought of writing to him. She thought of bursting the bonds of Bisontine society, by introducing Albert into the salon of the Hôtel de Rupt. This enterprise, which would have appeared the height of impossibility to the Abbé de Grancey himself, was the affair of an idea.

"Ah!" said she to herself, "my father has got into disputes at his estate of Rouxey; I will go there! If he has not gone to law, I will make him; and then *he* will come to our house," she exclaimed, springing from her bed to the window, to look at the enchanted light which illuminated Albert's night.

It was striking one; he was still asleep.

"I shall see him when he gets up. Perhaps he will come to the window."

At this moment Mademoiselle de Watteville was the witness of an event which must place in her hands the means of arriving at a knowledge of Albert's secrets. By the light of the moon, she perceived two arms stretched out from the kiosk, and which were assisting Jerome, Albert's servant, to get over the wall and come into the kiosk. In the accomplice of Jerome, Rosalie immediately recognized Mariette, the lady's-maid.

"Mariette and Jerome!" said she to herself. "An ugly woman like Mariette! They must certainly be ashamed of each other."

If Mariette was horridly ugly and thirty-six years old, she had inherited several pieces of land. Having been seventeen years in the service of Madame de Watteville, who esteemed her much on account of her devoutness, her honesty, and her long standing in the house, she had no doubt economized and invested her wages and perquisites. Now, at the rate of about ten louis a year, she must be worth, reckoning the compound interest and her inheritances, about ten thousand francs. In the eyes of Jerome, ten thousand francs changed the laws of optics: he saw in Mariette a fine figure. He did not see the holes and seams a frightful small-pox had left in her plain, flat face; for him the distorted mouth was straight; and since the advocate Savaron, by taking him into his service, had brought him close to the Hôtel de Rupt, he had laid regular siege to the devout lady's-maid, who was as stiff and prudish as her mistress, and, like all ugly old maids, more exacting than the best-looking girls.

If the nocturnal scene of the kiosk is now made intelligible to intelligent people, it was not at all so to Rosalie, who, nevertheless, acquired the most dangerous of all knowledge, that taught by a bad example. A mother brings up her daughter severely, keeps her under her wings for seventeen years, and in an hour a servant destroys this long and arduous toil, sometimes by a word, often by a gesture! Rosalie went to bed again, not without reflecting on all the advantages she might derive from her discovery. The next morning, going to mass accompanied by Mariette (the baroness was indisposed), Rosalie took her maid's arm, which considerably astonished the Comtoise.

"Mariette," she said to her, "is Jerome in his master's confidence?"

"I don't know, mademoiselle."

"Don't play the innocent with me," answered Mademoiselle de Watteville, sharply. "You allowed him to embrace you last night in the kiosk. I am no longer astonished at your so highly approving of my mother's plans for its embellishment."

Rosalie felt the tremor which seized Mariette by that of her arm.

"I do not mean you any harm," said Rosalie in continuation. "Reassure yourself; I will not say a word to my mother, and you can see Jerome as often as you like."

"But, mademoiselle," answered Mariette, "it is all quite right and proper. Jerome has no other intentions than to marry me,"

"But why do you have meetings in the middle of the night, then?"

Mariette, floored, could not find an answer.

"Listen, Mariette. I myself am in love also! I love in secret and all alone. I am, after all, the only child of my father and mother; so you have more to hope for from me than from anybody else in the world."

"Certainly, mademoiselle, you may reckon on us for life and death," cried Mariette, delighted at this unforeseen result.

"In the first place, silence for silence," said Rosalie. "I do not want to marry Monsieur de Soulas; but I require, and absolutely, a certain thing. My protection is only to be obtained at this price."

"What?" asked Mariette.

"I want to see the letters Monsieur Savaron sends to the post by Jerome."

"But what for?" asked Mariette, alarmed.

"Oh, only to read them; and you will put them into the post yourself afterward. It will only delay them a little, that is all."

At this moment Mademoiselle de Watteville and Mariette entered the church, and each of them indulged in her reflections instead of reading the ordinary of the mass.

"My God! how many sins are there in all this?" said Mariette to herself.

Rosalie, whose mind, and head, and heart were upset by the reading of the tale, looked upon it, at last, as a sort of history written for her rival. By dint of reflecting, as children do, on the same thing, she eventually thought that the "Revue de l'Est" must be sent to Albert's beloved.

"Oh!" she said to herself, on her knees, her head buried in her hands, and in the attitude of a person absorbed in prayer, "oh, how am I to get my father to examine the list of the people to whom this review is sent?"

After breakfast, she walked round the garden with her father, coaxing him, and got him into the kiosk.

"Do you think, dear old papa, that our 'Revue' is sent abroad?"

"It has only just started."

"Well, I bet it is."

"It is scarcely possible."

"Go and see, and take down the names of the foreign subscribers."

Two hours afterward, Monsieur de Watteville said to his daughter, "I am right; there is not yet a single subscriber in foreign countries. They hope to have some at Neuchâtel, at Berne, and at Geneva. They do send a copy to Italy, but gratis, to a Milanese lady, at her country house on the Lago Maggiore at Belgirate."

"Her name?" said Rosalie, eagerly.

"The Duchess of Argaiolo."

"Do you know her, father?"

"I have heard of her. She is Princess Soderini by birth. She is a Florentine, a very great lady, and quite as rich as her husband, who possesses one of the finest fortunes in Lombardy. Their villa on the Lago Maggiore is one of the curiosities of Italy."

Two days later, Mariette handed the following letter to Mademoiselle de Watteville:—

Albert Savaron to Léopold Hannequin.

"Well, yes, my dear friend, I am at Besancon, while you thought I was traveling. I would not tell you anything until the moment when success was beginning, and it has dawned. Yes, dear Léopold, after so many abortive enterprises in

which I have expended the purest of my blood, in which I have thrown away so many efforts, consumed so much courage, I have resolved to do like you—to take the beaten path, the high-road, the longest and the surest. What a start I see you give on your notarial chair! But do not believe that there is anything of any sort changed in my inner life, the secret of which is known to you alone in the world, and with the reserve imposed by *her*. I did not tell you so, my friend, but I was horribly wornout at Paris. The result of the first enterprise, on which I placed all my hopes, and which turned out unsuccessful through the profound rascality of my two partners, who combined to cheat and plunder me—me, to whose activity everything was due!—made me give up the pursuit of pecuniary fortune, after having thus wasted three years of my life, of which one was spent in lawsuits. Perhaps I should have come worse off if I had not been obliged to study the law at twenty years of age. I have wished to become a politician, solely to be some day included in an edict on the peerage under the title of Count Albert Savaron de Savarus, and to revive in France a great name which has become extinct in Belgium, although I am neither legitimate nor legitimized."

"Ah! I was sure of it; he is of noble blood!" exclaimed Rosalie, dropping the letter.

"You knew how hard I studied—what an obscure but devoted and useful journalist, what an admirable secretary, I was to the statesman, who, on his part, was faithful to me in 1829. Thrust back again into obscurity by the revolution of July, just as my name was beginning to emerge—at the moment when, as a *maître des requêtes*, I was about at last to become a part, as a necessary wheel, of the political machine—I committed the blunder of remaining faithful to the vanquished, of combating for them, without them. Ah! why was I only three and thirty, and how was it I didn't beg you to render me eligible! I concealed from you all my devotedness and my perils. What could I do? I had faith. We should not have agreed. Ten months ago, while you always saw me so gay and happy, writing my political articles, I was in despair. I found myself, at seven and thirty, with two thousand francs for my whole fortune, without the least celebrity, having just failed in a noble enterprise, a daily paper which only satisfied a want of the future, instead of addressing itself to the passions of the moment. I no longer knew what to do; and I felt my own powers! I went about, sad and dejected, in the solitary places of that Paris which had deserted me, thinking of my disappointed ambitions, but without abandoning them. Oh, what letters, stamped with rage, did I not write then to *her*, my second conscience, my other self! At times I said to myself, 'Why have I made out so vast a programme for my life? Why desire all? Why not await happiness while devoting myself to some quasi-mechanical occupation?'

"I cast my eyes then on a humble appointment by which I could get a living. I was about to have the management of a newspaper under an editor who did not know much, an ambitious man of wealth, when I was seized with terror. 'Would she accept for her husband a lover who had sunk so low?' I said to myself. This reflection sent me back again to two and twenty.

"Oh, dear Léopold, how the soul wears itself out in these perplexities! What must the caged eagles suffer then, the imprisoned lions? They suffer all that Napoleon suffered, not at St. Helena, but on the quay of the Tuileries, on the 10th of August, when he saw Louis XVI. defending himself so badly—he who knew how to put down sedition, as he afterward did on the same spot, in Vendemiaire. Well, my life has been this day's sufferings spread over four years. How many speeches to the Chamber have I not delivered to the deserted alleys of the Bois de Boulogne? These useless improvisations have at least sharpened my tongue, and accustomed my mind to put its ideas into words. During these secret torments you were getting married, you were completing the payment for your business,

and you were becoming *adjoint* to the mayor of your arrondissement, after having won the cross by getting wounded at St. Merri.

"Listen! When I was quite a little fellow, and tormented the cock-chafers, there was a movement of these poor insects which almost gave me the fever. It was when I saw them making repeated efforts to take wing, but without being able to fly, although they succeeded in moving their wings. We used to say, '*They are counting!*' Was it sympathy? Was it a vision of the future? Oh, to spread one's wings, and not to be able to fly! That has been my fate ever since the splendid enterprise with which they disgusted me, but which has since enriched four families.

"In short, seven months ago, I resolved to make myself a name at the bar of Paris, seeing what openings had been left by the promotion of so many barristers to high offices. But, remembering the rivalries I had already observed in the bosom of the press, and how difficult it is to get on in a career of any sort in Paris, the arena where so many champions encounter, I took a resolution cruel for myself, but of sure effect, and perhaps more rapid than any other. You had thoroughly explained to me, in our conversations, the constitution of society at Besancon; the impossibility of a stranger getting on there, causing the slightest sensation, marrying, penetrating into society, or succeeding in anything whatever. It was there I resolved to go and plant my flag, reasonably thinking that I should there escape competition, and find myself the only one secretly canvassing for election. The Comtois will not receive the stranger; the stranger will not receive them. They refuse to admit him into their salons; he will never go into them. He will never show himself anywhere, not even in the streets! But there is a class which elects members; it is the commercial class. I will specially study commercial questions, which I know something of already. I will gain causes; I will arrange differences; I will become the first advocate of Besancon. Later on, I will start a 'Review,' in which I will defend the interests of the province, or I will create, support, or revive them. When I have acquired, one by one, enough votes, my name will come out of the urn. They will disdain for some time the unknown barrister, but something will happen to bring him to light—a gratuitous speech in court, an affair the other barristers will not undertake. If I once speak, I am sure of success.

"Well, my dear Léopold, I packed up my library in eleven boxes, I bought the law-books which might be useful to me, and put the whole, as well as my furniture, on the road to Besancon. I took out my certificates, I made up a thousand crowns, and came to wish you good-by. The mail dropped me at Besancon, where in the space of three days, I selected a small suite of apartments looking on to a garden. I arranged sumptuously the mysterious cabinet, in which I spend my days and nights, in which shines the portrait of my idol, of her to whom my life is consecrated, who absorbs it, who is the source of my efforts, the secret of my courage, the cause of my talent. Then, when the furniture and books arrived, I took an intelligent servant, and remained for five months like a dormouse in the winter.

"I had been inscribed on the list of advocates. At last, I was officially appointed to defend a poor devil at the assizes, no doubt in order to hear me speak, at all events, once! One of the most influential merchants of Besancon was on the jury; he had a complicated case going on. I used all my efforts in this cause to impress this man, and I had the most complete success in the world. My client was innocent; I had the two culprits, who were among the witnesses, dramatically arrested. Even the court joined in the admiration of the public. I was able to save the self-love of the *juge d'instruction* by showing the almost impossibility of detecting a plot so well laid. I got my great merchant for a client, and I gained him his cause. The chapter of the cathedral selected me for counsel in a heavy case with the town, which had been going on

for four years; I won it. In these cases, I became the greatest advocate of Franche Comté. But I enshroud my life in the most profound mystery, and thus conceal my pretensions. I have contracted habits which relieve me from accepting any invitation. I can only be consulted from six to eight in the morning; I go to bed after dinner, and work during the night.

"The vicar-general, a man of intelligence and great influence, who confided to me the cause of the chapter, already lost in the first stage, naturally spoke of gratitude. 'Sir,' I said to him, 'I will win your cause; but I want no fee. I want more' (sudden start of the abbé). 'Know that I lose enormously by appearing as the adversary of the town. I came here in order to go back a deputy; I only take commercial cases because the commercial men return the members, and they will mistrust me if I plead for *the priests*—for you are *the priests* to them. If I accept your case, it is because I was, in 1828, private secretary to such a ministry' (fresh movement of astonishment on the part of my abbé)—'*maître des requetes,* under the name of Albert de Savarus' (another movement). 'I have remained faithful to monarchical principles, but as you do not possess a majority in Besancon, I must acquire votes among the tradesmen. Therefore, the fee I ask of you is the votes that you may be able to procure me at the opportune moment and in secret. Let us keep each other's secret, and I will plead, gratis, all the affairs of all the priests in the diocese. Not a word of my antecedents, and let us be true to each other.'

"When he came to thank me, he handed me a five hundred franc note, and said in my ear, 'The votes still hold good.' In the five conferences we have had, I have made a friend, I believe, of the vicar-general. Now, overwhelmed with business, I only undertake the merchants', saying that commercial questions are my specialty. These tactics connect me with the commercial men, and allow me to court the influential people. Thus, all goes well. In a few months I shall have found in Besancon a house to buy, which will give me the electoral qualification. I reckon on you to lend me the capital necessary for this purchase. If I die, if I fail, there would not be loss enough to be a consideration between us. The rents will pay you the interest; and, besides, I shall take care to wait for a good opportunity, so that you may not lose anything by this necessary mortgage.

"Ah! my dear Léopold, never did gambler, having the remains of his fortune in his pocket, and playing with it at the *Cercle des Étrangers,* in one last night from which he will rise either rich or ruined, feel in his ears the perpetual singing, on his hands the nervous dampness, in his head the fevered agitation, in his body the internal tremors, that I experience every day while playing my last stake in the game of ambition. Alas! my dear and only friend, I have been fighting now for nearly ten years. This combat with men and things, in which I have incessantly exerted all my strength and all my energy, in which I have so worn out the springs of desire, has undermined me, so to speak, internally. With all the appearance of health and strength, I feel myself ruined. Every day carries away a shred of my inner life; at each new effort, I feel that I shall never be able to repeat it. I have no more strength or power left, except for happiness, and if that does not come and place its crown of roses on my head, the *me* I am will exist no longer. I shall become a ruined object; I should no longer desire anything in the world, nor wish to be anything in it. You know that power and glory, the immense moral fortune I pursue, is only secondary; it is for me the means of happiness, the pedestal of my idol.

"To expire on reaching the goal, like the ancient runner; to see fortune and death arrive together at the threshold; to obtain the object of our love when love is extinct; to possess no longer the power of enjoyment, when we have earned the means of happiness—oh, how many men have undergone this destiny!

"There is certainly a moment when Tantalus stops, folds his arms, and defies the infernals, rejecting his part of

an eternal dupe. I should be at this point if anything were to upset my plans; if, after having bowed myself to the dust of the province, having crawled like a hungry tiger round these merchants, these electors, to get their votes; if, after having worked up dry cases, having given my time—a time that I might have spent on the Lago Maggiore, looking at the waters she looks at, reposing under her eyes, listening to her voice—I did not bound to the tribune, to conquer there the glory that must surround the name which is to succeed that of Argaiolo. More than that, Léopold; there are days when I feel a vaporous languor; a mortal disgust rises from the depths of my soul, above all when, in long reveries, I have plunged by anticipation into the midst of the joys of happy love! Does desire, then, only inspire us with a certain dose of strength, and will it perish under a too great effusion of its substance? After all, at this moment my life is fair, lighted on by faith, by work, and by love. Adieu, my friend; I embrace your children, and you will recall to the recollection of your excellent wife Your ALBERT."

Rosalie read this letter twice over, and its general sense was engraved on her heart. She penetrated suddenly into the previous life of Albert, for her quick intelligence explained its details and enabled her to take in its whole extent. By comparing this confidence with the tale published in the "Review," she understood Albert thoroughly. She naturally exaggerated the proportions, already so grand, of this noble soul and this powerful will; and her love for Albert became then a passion whose violence was increased by all the force of her youth, by the dullness of her solitude, by the secret energy of her character. To love is an effect of the law of nature in a young girl, but when her longing for affection is fixed on an extraordinary man, it is mingled with the enthusiasm which overflows in youthful hearts. Accordingly, Mademoiselle de Watteville arrived in a few days at a quasi-morbid and very dangerous phase of amatory excitement. The baroness was very satisfied with her daughter, who, under the empire of her profound preoccupation, no longer resisted her, appeared devoted to her various feminine occupations, and realized her *beau ideal* of an obedient daughter.

The barrister spoke two or three times a week. Although overwhelmed with business, he contrived to appear in court, to conduct the commercial litigation and the "Review," and remained in a profound mystery, comprehending that the more his influence was silent and concealed, the more real it would be. But he neglected no means of success, studying the list of Bisontine electors and discovering their interests, their characters, their various friendships, and their antipathies. Did ever a cardinal who wanted to be pope take so much trouble?

One evening, Mariette, when she came to dress Rosalie for a *soirée* brought her, not without groaning over this abuse of confidence, a letter whose address made Mademoiselle de Watteville tremble, and turn pale, and blush.

A Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo,
Née Princesse Soderini,
à Belgirate,
Lac Majeur,
Italie.

This address flashed on her eyes as the *Mane, Thecel, Phares,* must have flashed on the eyes of Belshazzar. After having hidden the letter, Rosalie went down to go with her mother to Madame de Chavoncourt's, and during the whole of this eternal evening she was assailed by remorse and scruples. She had already felt shame at having violated the secrecy of Albert's letter to Léopold. She had asked herself several times whether, knowing this crime, infamous inasmuch as it was necessarily unpunished, the noble Albert could have any esteem for her. Her conscience energetically answered her, "No!" She had expiated her fault by doing self-imposed penance. She fasted; she mortified herself by remaining on her knees, with her arms crossed, and saying prayers for several hours. She had compelled Mariette to the same acts of repentance.

The truest asceticism mingled with her passion, and rendered it all the more dangerous.

"Shall I read or shall I not read the letter?" she asked herself while listening to the little De Chavoncourts. One was sixteen, and the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie looked upon her two friends as little girls, because they were not secretly in love. "If I read it," she said to herself, after having vibrated for an hour between yes or no, "it will certainly be the last. Since I have done so much to know what he writes to his friend, why should I not know what he writes to *her?* If it is a horrible crime, is it not a proof of love? Oh, Albert, am I not your wife?"

When Rosalie was in bed, she opened the letter, dated from day to day, so as to give the duchess a faithful picture of the life and sentiments of Albert.

"25th.

"My dear Life!—All goes well. To the conquests I had already made I have just added a precious one; I have rendered a service to one of the most influential personages at the elections. Like the critics, who make reputations without ever being able to make one for themselves, he makes deputies without ever being able to become one. The good man wished to prove his gratitude at a cheap rate, almost without untying his purse-string, by asking me, 'Would you like to go into the Chamber? I can get you elected a deputy.' 'If I were to resolve to embrace a political career,' I answered him very hypocritically, 'it would be to devote myself to the Comté, which I love, and where I am appreciated.' 'Well, we will decide you, and we shall have an influence in the Chamber through you, for you will shine there.'

"Thus, my beloved angel, whatever you may say, my perseverance will be crowned with success. In a little while, I shall speak from the summit of the French tribune to my country and to Europe. My name will be wafted to you by the hundred voices of the French press.

"Yes, as you tell me, I came to Besancon old, and Besancon has aged me still more; but, like Sextus V., I shall be young on the morrow of my election. I shall enter on my true life, into my proper sphere. Shall we not be then on an equality? The Count Savaron de Savarus, ambassador to I don't know where, may surely marry a Princess Soderini, widow of the Duke d'Argaiolo. Triumph brings back youth to men fortified by incessant combats? Oh, my life, with what joy did I rush from my library to my cabinet, to your dear portrait, to which I told my progress before writing to you! Yes, my own votes, those of the vicar-general, those of the people I shall oblige, and those of this client, already assure my election.

"26th.

"We have entered on the twelfth year since the happy night when, by a look, the fair duchess ratified the promises of the proscribed Francesca. Ah! dearest, you are thirty-two; I am thirty-five; the good duke is seventy-seven—that is to say, his age is ten years more than our two—and he is still in good health. I have nearly as much patience as love; and, besides, I want a few years more to raise my fortune to the height of your name. You see, I am gay; I joke to-day. Such is the effect of hope. Sadness or gayety, everything comes from you. The hope of getting on always brings me back to the morrow of the day I saw you for the first time, in which my life became attached to yours, like the earth to the sun. *Qual pianto* these eleven years, for it is the twenty-sixth of December, the anniversary of my arrival at your villa on the Lake of Constance. For eleven years now I have been bewailing myself, and you shining above me like a star placed beyond the reach of a mortal.

"27th.

"No, dearest, do not go to Milan; stay at Belgirate. Milan frightens me. I do not like the abominable Milanese habit of chatting every evening at the Scala with a dozen people, among whom it would be singular if one did not say some sweet things to you. For me, solitude is like

the piece of amber, in the bosom of which an insect lives eternally in its unchangeable beauty. The body and soul of a woman remain thus pure and in the symmetry of their youth. Is it the *Tedeschi* that you regret?

"28th.

"Your statue will never be finished, then? I should like to have you in marble, in painting, in miniature, in every style to deceive my impatience. I am still expecting the view of Belgirate from the south, and that from the gallery. They are the only ones wanting. I am so busy that I can say nothing but a nothing to-day, but this nothing is everything. Was it not out of nothing that God made the world? This nothing is a word, the word of God: *I love you!*

"30th.

"Ah! I have received your journal. Thanks for your punctuality. You felt pleased, then, at seeing the details of our first acquaintance thus published? Alas! although they were disguised, I was terribly afraid of offending you. We had no novel, and a 'Revue' without a novel is a beauty without hair. *Uninventive* by nature, and in despair, I took the only poesy in my soul, the only adventure in my memory; I brought it down to a readable tone, and I never ceased to think of you while writing the only literary production which will ever come from my heart—I do not say from my pen. Did not the transformation of the ferocious Sormano into Gina make you laugh?

"You ask, how is my health? Why, much better than in Paris. Although I work tremendously, the calmness of the scene has an influence on the soul. What fatigues and ages one, dear angel, is the anguish of deceived vanity, the perpetual irritations of Paris life, the contests of rival ambitions. Peace is a balm. If you knew what pleasure your letter has given me, that nice long letter in which you tell the trifling incidents of your life! No; you will never know, you women, to what an extent a real lover is interested by these trifles. The sight of the scrap of your new dress gave me immense pleasure. Can it be a matter of indifference to know how you are dressed, whether your noble brow is wrinkled, whether our authors amuse you, whether the songs of Canalis affect you? I read the books you read. There is nothing, even to your excursion on the lake, which does not interest me. Your letter is noble and gentle as your soul. O heavenly and constantly adored flower! could I have lived without these dear letters, which, for eleven years, have sustained me on my difficult path like a ray of light, like a perfume, like a regular chant, like a divine food, like everything that consoles and charms life? Do not fail me. If you knew my anxiety on the eve of the day I receive them, and the suffering the delay of a day causes me! Is she ill! Is it *he?* I am between Paradise and Gehenna; I go mad. *O mia cara diva!* Continue to cultivate music, exercise your voice, study. I am charmed with the conformity of studies and hours which causes us, although separated by the Alps, to live in precisely the same manner. This idea charms me and gives me courage. When I pleaded for the first time—I have not told you so before—I fancied you were listening to me, and I suddenly felt the movement of inspiration which elevates the poet above humanity. If I go to the Chamber, you must come to Paris to be present at my *début*.

"30th, Evening.

"My God! how I love you! Alas! I have staked too much on my love and my hopes. An accident which should upset this overloaded bark would destroy my life. It is three years since I have seen you, and at the idea of going to Belgirate my heart beats so violently I am obliged to stop. To see you; to hear that infantine and caressing voice; to embrace with the eyes that ivory skin so dazzling in the light, and beneath which beats your noble heart; to admire your fingers running over the keys; to receive your whole soul in a look, and your heart in the accent of an '*Oimé*' or an 'Alberto'; to walk together among your orange trees in flower; to live for some months in the bosom of this sublime scene—that is life. Oh, what folly to run after power, fame, fortune!

It is all at Belgirate: there is poetry, there is glory. I ought to have made myself your steward, or, as the dear tyrant whom we cannot hate proposed, lived there as *cavalière servente*, which our ardent passion did not permit us to accept. Adieu, my angel. You will pardon me my next fit of sadness for the sake of this gayety, falling like a ray from the torch of hope, which until now had appeared a will-o'-the-wisp."

"How he loves!" exclaimed Rosalie, letting fall the letter, which seemed too heavy to hold. After eleven years, to write like this!"

"Mariette," said Mademoiselle de Watteville to the lady's-maid, the next morning, "go and put this letter in the post. Tell Jerome I know all I wanted to know, and he is to be faithful to Monsieur Albert. We will confess these sins without saying to whom the letters belonged, or where they were going. I have done very wrong: I am the only culprit."

"You have been crying, mademoiselle," said Mariette.

"Yes; and I should not like my mother to notice it. Give me some very cold water."

In the midst of her storms of passion, Rosalie often listened to the voice of her conscience. Touched by this admirable fidelity of two hearts, she had just said her prayers, and told herself there was nothing left for her but to resign herself, to respect the happiness of two beings worthy of each other, resigned to their fate, awaiting everything from God, without giving way to criminal wishes or actions. She felt herself better, she experienced an internal satisfaction, after having taken this resolution, inspired by the rectitude natural to youth. She was encouraged in it by a young girl's reflection: she was sacrificing herself for *him*.

"She does not know how to love," she thought. "Ah! if it were me, I would sacrifice everything to a man who loved me like that. To be loved! When and by whom shall I be loved myself? This little Monsieur de Soulas is only in love with my fortune; if I were poor, he would pay no attention to me."

"Rosalie, my girl, what are you thinking about? You are going beyond the line," said the baroness to her daughter, who was making worked slippers for the baron.

Rosalie spent the whole of the winter of 1834–1835 in secret conflicts; but in the spring, in the month of April, the period at which she attained her nineteenth year, she sometimes said to herself that it would be a great thing to triumph over a Duchess d'Argaiolo. In silence and solitude, the prospect of this struggle rekindled her passion and her evil thoughts. She strengthened in advance her romantic temerity by forming plans on plans. Although such characters are exceptional, there exist, unfortunately, far too many Rosalies, and this history ought to be an example to them.

During this winter, Albert Savarus had silently made immense progress in Besancon. Sure of success, he awaited with impatience the dissolution of the Chamber. He had won over, among the *juste-milieu* party, one of the makers of Besancon, a rich contractor who wielded great influence.

The Romans everywhere took enormous pains and expended immense sums to get an excellent and unlimited water supply in all the cities of their empire. At Besancon they drank the water of Arcier, a mountain situated at a pretty good distance from Besancon. Besancon is a town situated in the hollow of a horseshoe decribed by the Doubs; so that to re-establish the aqueduct of the Romans, in order to drink the water the Romans drank, in a town watered by the Doubs, is one of those absurd ideas which could only take in a province where the most exemplary gravity reigns. If this fancy got hold of the hearts of the Bisontines, it would necessitate a large expenditure, and this expenditure would be to the profit of the influential man. Albert Savaron de Savarus decided that the Doubs was good for nothing but to flow under suspension bridges, and that the only drinkable water was that of Arcier. Articles

appeared in the "Revue de l'Est," which were only the expression of the ideas of Bisontine commerce. The nobles and the citizens, the *juste milieu* and the Legitimists, the Government and the Opposition—in short, all the world was perfectly agreed in wanting to drink the water of Arcier, and possess a suspension bridge. The question of the Arcier water was the order of the day at Besancon. At Besancon, as in the two railways to Versailles, as in existing abuses, there were hidden interests which gave a powerful vitality to the idea. The reasonable people, few in number, besides, who opposed this project were treated as blockheads. Nothing was talked about but the two plans of the barrister Savaron.

After eighteen months of subterranean toil, this ambitious man had succeeded, then, in the most stationary town in France and the most obdurate to strangers, in stirring it profoundly, in making, according to a vulgar expression, sunshine and rain there, in exercising a positive influence without having gone outside his own door. He had solved the singular problem of being a power in a place without being popular. During this winter he gained seven causes for ecclesiastics in Besancon. So that, at some moments, he breathed by anticipation the air of the Chamber. His heart swelled at the thought of his coming triumph. This immense desire, which made him bring so many interests on the scene, and invent so many stratagems, was absorbing the last energies of his soul, strained beyond measure. They applauded his disinterestedness; he accepted without observations the fees of his clients. But this disinterestedness was moral usury; he expected a reward of more consideration to him than all the gold in the world. He had bought, professedly to render a service to a merchant whose affairs were embarrassed, in the month of October, 1834, and with the funds of Léopold Hannequin, a house which rendered him eligible for election. This profitable investment did not appear to have been either sought or desired.

"You are indeed a really remarkable man," said the Abbe de Grancey, who naturally watched and understood the barrister, to Savarus. The vicar-general had come to introduce to him a canon who required his advice. "You are," said he, "a priest who is not in his right road."

This saying struck Savarus.

On her side, Rosalie had decided, in her weak girl's strong head, to bring Monsieur de Savarus into the salon, and introduce him into the society of the Hôtel de Rupt. She limited her desires as yet to seeing Albert and listening to him. She had compromised, so to speak, and compromises are often only truces.

The Rouxeys, the patrimonial estate of the Wattevilles, was worth ten thousand francs a year net, but in other hands it would have produced much more. The carelessness of the baron, whose wife would have, and had, an income of forty thousand francs, left the Rouxeys under the management of a sort of Maître Jacques, an old servant of the house of Watteville, named Modinier. Still, whenever the baron and baroness felt inclined to go into the country, they went to the Rouxeys, the situation of which is very picturesque. The house, the park—in fact, everything had been created by the famous Watteville, who, in his active old age, was passionately fond of this magnificent spot.

Between two little Alps, two peaks whose summits are bare, and which are called the Great and the Little Rouxey, in the middle of a gorge through which the waters of these mountains descend and flow on to mingle with the delicious sources of the Doubs, Watteville had had the idea of constructing an enormous dam, leaving two weirs for the overflow of the waters. Above his dam, he obtained a lovely lake, and below it, two cascades which, uniting at some yards from their fall, fed a charming stream, with which he watered the parched, uncultivated valley formerly devastated by the torrent from the Rouxeys. This lake, this valley, and these mountains he shut in by an inclosure, and built himself a hermitage on the dam, which he made

three acres in width, bringing to it all the earth that had to be dug out to make the bed of the stream and the canals for irrigation. When the Baron de Watteville made himself the lake above his dam, he was the proprietor of the two Rouxeys, but not of the higher valley which he thus inundated, through which there had always been a way, and which terminates in a horseshoe at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. But this savage old man inspired so much terror that, during his whole life, there was no complaint on the part of the inhabitants of Les Riceys, a little village situated on the other side of the Dent de Vilard. When the baron died, he had united the slopes of the two Rouxeys to the foot of the Dent de Vilard, by a strong wall, in order not to inundate the two valleys which opened into the gorge of the Rouxeys, to the right and left of the peak of Vilard. He died, having made a conquest of the Dent de Vilard. His heirs constituted themselves the protectors of the village of Riceys and thus maintained the usurpation. The old murderer, the old renegade, the old Abbé Watteville, had finished his career in planting trees, and making a splendid road, cut in the flank of one of the two Rouxeys, and which ran into the high-road. Attached to this park and this habitation were grounds very ill cultivated, cottages on the two mountains, and uncultivated woods. It was wild and solitary, under the protection of nature, abandoned to the chances of vegetation, but full of sublime pastures. You can now picture to yourself the Rouxeys.

It is quite unnecessary to encumber this history by recounting the prodigious efforts, and the stratagems stamped with genius, by which Rosalie attained her end without exciting suspicion. Suffice it to say that, in obedience to her mother, she left Besancon in the month of May, 1835, in an old carriage drawn by two big hired horses, and went with her father to the Rouxeys.

Love explains everything to young girls. When, on rising the morning after her arrival at the Rouxeys, Mademoiselle de Watteville looked from the window of her room on to the fair sheet of water, from which arose vapors exhaled like fumes, and which hovered among the firs and larches, crawling along the two peaks to gain their summits, she gave vent to a cry of admiration.

They fell in love while they were among the lakes; *she* is on a lake! Decidedly, a lake is full of love.

A lake fed by the snows shows the tints of an opal and the transparency of an enormous diamond; but when it is shut in, like that of the Rouxeys, between two blocks of granite clothed with firs, when there reigns over it the silence of a savanna or a steppe, it extorts from every one the cry just uttered by Rosalie.

"We owe this," said her father, "to the famous Watteville."

"Upon my honor," said the young girl, "he wanted to atone for his crimes. Let us get into the boat and go to the end," said she; "we shall get an appetite for breakfast."

The baron sent for two young gardeners who knew how to row, and took with him his first minister Modinier. The lake was six acres and sometimes ten or twelve in width, and four hundred acres in length.

Rosalie soon got to the further end, which was bounded by the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of this little Switzerland.

"Here we are, *monsieur le baron,*" said Modinier, making a sign to the two gardeners to make the boat fast; "will you come and see?"

"See what?" asked Rosalie.

"Oh, nothing," said the baron. "But you are a sensible girl; we have our secrets together, and I may tell you what is worrying my mind. Since 1830, difficulties have arisen between the commune of Riceys and me, precisely on account of the Dent de Vilard, and I want to settle them without your mother's knowledge; for she is obstinate, and is capable of getting into a passion, particularly if she knows that the mayor of Riceys, a Republican, got up the dispute to gratify his peeple."

Rosalie had courage enough to disguise her joy, in order to have all the more in-

fluence on her father. "What dispute?" said she.

"Mademoiselle," said Modinier, "the people of the Riceys have for a long time had a right of pasture and wood-cutting on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now, Monsieur Chantonnil, their mayor ever since 1830, asserts that the whole of the Dent belongs to his commune, and maintains that a hundred and odd years ago there was a right of way over our lands. You comprehend that in that case we should no longer be in our own house. And then this savage would say next, what the old inhabitants of the Riceys say, that the site of the lake had been appropriated by the Abbé de Watteville. Why, it would be the ruin of the Rouxeys."

"Alas! my child, between ourselves, it is true," said Monsieur de Watteville, frankly. "This estate is a usurpation consecrated by time; therefore, to avoid all further disputes, I intended to propose to settle amicably my boundaries on this side of the Dent de Vilard, and then I would build a wall."

"If you give way before the Republic, it will devour you. It was for you to threaten the Riceys."

"That is just what I was saying to monsieur yesterday evening," replied Modinier. "But, to support this opinion, I proposed to him to come and see whether there were not, either on this side of the Dent or the other, at any part of it, traces of an inclosure."

For a hundred years both sides had been making the most of the Dent de Vilard, the species of party wall between the commune of the Riceys and the Rouxeys, which did not produce a great deal, without coming to extremities. The object in litigation being covered with snow six months out of the twelve, was of a nature to keep the question cool. So it required all the ardor inspired by the Revolution of 1830 in the defenders of the people to reanimate this affair, through which Monsieur Chantonnil, mayor of the Riceys, hoped to dramatize his existence on the quiet frontier of Switzerland, and immortalize his administration. Chantonnil, as his name indicates, was of Neuchâtel origin.

"My dear father," said Rosalie, on getting into the boat again, "I agree with Modinier. If you want to obtain the joint property of the Dent de Vilard, it is necessary to act with vigor, and obtain a judgment which will make you safe against the proceedings of this Chantonnil. Why should you be afraid? Get the famous Savaron for your counsel; secure him at once, so that Chantonnil may not confide to him the interests of his commune. The man who won the cause of the chapter against the town will certainly be able to win that of the Wattevilles against the Riceys! Besides," said she, "the Rouxeys will be mine some day (as far off as possible, I hope). Well, do not leave me any lawsuits. I like this place, and I shall often inhabit it. I shall enlarge it as much as I can. On these banks," said she, pointing to the bases of the two Rouxeys, "I will have clumps of trees planted; I will make charming English gardens of them. Let us go to Besancon, and not come back without the Abbe de Grancey, Monsieur Savaron, and my mother, if she likes. Then you will be able to come to a decision; but, in your place, I should have decided already. You bear the name of a Watteville, and you are afraid of a combat! If you lose the cause, then I will never say a word to reproach you."

"Oh, if you take it in that light, I am quite willing; and I will see the advocate."

"Besides, a lawsuit is very amusing. It gives an interest to your life; you go and come and bustle about. Will you not have a thousand steps to take to get at the judges? We never saw the Abbé de Grancey for more than three weeks, he was so busy!"

"But the whole existence of the chapter was at stake," said Monsieur de Watteville. "And, besides that, the self-esteem, the conscience of the archbishop, everything that priests live for, was concerned. This Savaron does not know what he has done for the chapter; he has saved it."

"Listen to me," she whispered. "If

you have Monsieur Savaron for you, you will win, will you not? Well, let me give you a piece of advice. You can only get hold of Monsieur Savaron through Monsieur de Grancey. If you think I am right, let us speak to the dear abbé together, without my mother being at the conference; for I know a means of inducing him to get us Monsieur Savaron."

"It will be very difficult not to mention it to your mother."

"The Abbé de Grancey will undertake that afterward; but make up your mind to promise your vote to the barrister Savaron at the next election, and you will see."

"Go to the elections! Take the oath!" exclaimed the Baron de Watteville.

"Bah!" said she.

"And what will your mother say?"

"Perhaps she will order you to do it," answered Rosalie, who knew from the letter of Albert to Léopold the promises made by the vicar-general.

Four days after, the Abbé de Grancey popped upon Albert de Savaron very early in the morning, having given notice of his visit the day before. The old priest came to retain the great advocate for the house of Watteville—a step which reveals the tact and adroitness secretly brought into play by Rosalie.

"What can I do for you, monsieur the vicar-general?" said Savarus.

The abbé, who rattled through his business with admirable good humor, was coldly listened to by Albert.

"My dear abbé," answered he, "it is impossible for me to undertake the interests of the house of Watteville, and you will understand why. The part I have to play here consists of keeping the strictest neutrality. I do not want to show any colors, and must remain an enigma until the eve of my election. Now, to plead for the Wattevilles would be nothing in Paris; but here—here, where everything is commented upon—everybody would set me down as the representative of your *faubourg* Saint Germain."

"What, do you believe that you will be able to remain unknown on the day of election, when the candidates attack each other? People must know then that your name is Savaron de Savarus, that you have been *maître des requêtes*, and that you are a supporter of the Restoration."

"On the day of election," said Savarus, "I shall be everything it is necessary to be. I intend to speak at the preliminary meetings."

"If Monsieur de Watteville and his party support you, you will have a hundred compact votes, and rather more reliable ones than those on which you reckon. You can always sow division among interests, but you cannot split up convictions."

"Oh, the deuce!" resumed Savarus. "I love you, and would do a great deal for you, father. Perhaps we may come to terms with the devil. Whatever may be the nature of Monsieur de Watteville's business, we may, by employing Girardet and giving him instructions, delay proceedings until after the elections. I will only undertake to plead on the day after my election."

"Do one thing," said the abbé. "Come to the Hôtel de Rupt. There is a young girl of nineteen there, who will one day have an income of a hundred thousand francs, and you will appear to be paying your addresses to her."

"Ah! the young girl I see so often in the kiosk."

"Yes, Mademoiselle Rosalie," resumed the Abbé de Grancey. "You are ambitious. If you please her, you will be everything an ambitious man desires to be—who knows? perhaps a minister. A man can always be a minister when he combines a fortune of a hundred thousand francs a year with your astounding abilities."

"*Monsieur l'Abbé,*" said Albert, warmly, "if Mademoiselle de Watteville had three times as large a fortune and adored me, it would be impossible for me to marry her."

"Are you married, then?" asked the Abbé de Grancey.

"Not in church, nor at the *mairie,*" said Savarus, "but morally."

"That is worse, when one is as strongly

attached as you seem to be," replied the abbé. "What is not done can be undone. Do not rest your fortune and your plans on the will of a woman, any more than a wise man waits for a dead man's shoes to start on a journey."

"Let us leave Mademoiselle de Watteville alone," said Albert, gravely, "and settle our arrangements. For your sake, whom I love and respect, I will plead, but after the elections, for Monsieur de Watteville. Until then your business will be managed by Girardet, according to my instructions. That is all I can do for you."

"But there are questions which can only be decided after an inspection of the locality," said the vicar-general.

"Girardet will go," replied Savarus. "I cannot allow myself, in the midst of a town I know so well, to take a step of a nature to compromise the immense interests concealed behind my election."

The Abbé de Grancey, on leaving Savarus, gave him a sly look, by which he seemed to laugh at the compact policy of the young athlete, while admiring his resolution.

"Ah! I have dragged my father into a lawsuit! Ah! I have done all this to get you here!" said Rosalie to herself, from the height of the kiosk, looking at the barrister in his cabinet the day after the conference between Albert and the Abbé de Grancey, the result of which had been communicated to her by her father. "I have committed mortal sins, and you will not enter the salon of the Hôtel de Rupt, and I shall not hear your splendid voice! You put conditions on your assistance when the Wattevilles and the Rupts ask for it! Well, God knows I would have been satisfied with these small pleasures—to see you, to hear you, to go to the Rouxeys with you, and have them consecrated for me by your presence. I did not want any more. But now I will be your wife! Yes, yes; look at *her* portraits, examine *her* salons, *her* room, the four fronts of *her* villa, the views in *her* gardens! You are waiting for her statue! I will turn her to marble herself for you. Besides, this woman cannot love. Art, science, literature, singing, and music have taken up half her senses and her intellect. Besides, she is old; she is more than thirty, and my Albert would be unhappy!"

"What makes you stay there, Rosalie?" said her mother, interrupting the reflections of her daughter. "Monsieur de Soulas is in the salon, and remarked your attitude, which certainly betrayed more thoughts than you ought to have at your age."

"Is Monsieur de Soulas an enemy of thought?" asked she.

"You were thinking, then?" said Madame de Watteville.

"Why, yes, mamma."

"Why, no, you were not thinking. You were looking at the windows of this barrister with an interest which is neither proper nor decent, and which Monsieur de Soulas, least of all persons, ought to remark."

"But why?" said Rosalie.

"Well," said the baroness, "it is time that you knew our intentions. Amédée admires you, and you will not be badly off as Countess de Soulas."

Pale as a lily, Rosalie made no answer to her mother, the violence of her disappointed sentiments rendered her so thoroughly stupid. But in the presence of this man, whom she hated so deeply since an instant ago, she put on the indefinable smile that dancers put on for the public. In short, she was able to laugh, she had strength to conceal her rage, which calmed itself down, for she resolved to employ this great silly young fellow for her own purposes.

"Monsieur Amédée," she said to him, during a moment when the baroness was in advance of them in the garden, affecting to leave the young people alone, "you did not know, then, that Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus is a Legitimist?"

"A Legitimist?"

"Before 1830 he was *maître des requêtes* to the Council of State, attached to the presidency of the Council of Ministers, and in favor with the dauphin and dauphiness. It would have been good of you not to say anything against him, but

it would be still better to go to the elections this year, to support him and prevent that poor Monsieur de Chavoncourt from representing the town of Besancon."

"But why do you take such a sudden interest in this Savaron?"

"Monsieur Albert de Savarus, the natural son of the Count de Savarus (pray keep this piece of indiscretion secret), if he is elected deputy, will be our counsel in the affair of the Rouxeys. The Rouxeys, my father tells me, will be my property. I should like to live there; it is charming! I should be in despair at seeing this magnificent creation of the great Watteville destroyed."

"*Diantre!*" said Amédée to himself, on leaving the Hôtel de Rupt, "this heiress is not quite such a fool as her mother thinks her."

Monsieur de Chavoncourt is a Royalist who belongs to the famous 221. Accordingly, from the very day of the Revolution of July, he preached the salutary doctrine of taking the oath and combating the actual order of things, after the example of the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not adopted by the Legitimists, who, in their defeat, had the good sense to differ in opinion and rely on the *vis inertiœ* and on Providence. Exposed to the suspicion of his party, Monsieur de Chavoncourt appeared to the members of the *juste milieu* the most satisfactory choice to make; they preferred the triumph of his moderate opinions to the ovation of a Republican who united the votes of the enthusiasts and the patriots. Monsieur de Chavoncourt, a man very much esteemed in Besancon, represented an old parliamentary family; his fortune, of about fifteen thousand francs a year, did not offend anybody, none the less because he had a son and three daughters. Fifteen thousand francs a year are nothing with such encumbrances. Now when, under these circumstances, the father of a family remains incorruptible, it is difficult for the electors not to esteem him. Electors manifest a passionate admiration for the *beau ideal* of parliamentary virtue, quite as much as the pit for the representation of generous sentiments it very seldom practices. Madame de Chavoncourt, then forty years of age, was one of the fine women of Besancon. During the sessions, she lived poorly on one of her estates, in order to make up by her economies for the expenses of Monsieur de Chavoncourt at Paris. In the winter, she entertained her friends honorably one day in the week, the Tuesday; but with a thorough knowledge of her duties as mistress of the house. Young Chavoncourt, aged twenty-two, and another young gentleman, named Monsieur de Vauchelles, no richer than Amédée, and also his schoolfellow, were exceedingly intimate. They went together to Granville; they went out shooting together; they were so well known as inseparables that they were invited into the country together.

Equally intimate with the young Chavoncourts, Rosalie knew that these three young men had no secrets from each other. She said to herself that if Monsieur de Soulas committed an indiscretion, it would be with his two intimate friends. Now, Monsieur de Vauchelles had his plans prepared for his marriage as Amédée had for his; he wanted to marry Victoire, the eldest of the young Chavoncourts, on whom an old aunt would settle an estate of seven thousand francs a year and a hundred thousand francs in money by the marriage contract. Victoire was the goddaughter and the favorite of this aunt. Evidently, then, young Chavoncourt and Vauchelles would warn Monsieur de Chavoncourt of the peril he would be placed in by the pretensions of Albert. But this was not enough for Rosalie; she wrote, with her left hand, an anonymous letter to the prefect of the department, signed *A friend of Louis Philippe*, in which she informed him of the secret candidature of Monsieur Albert de Savarus, explaining the dangerous support a Royalist orator would lend to Berryer, and exposing the deepness of the conduct pursued by the advocate at Besancon for the last two years. The prefect was an able man, a personal enemy of the Royalist party, and devoted by conviction to

the Government of July; in short, one of those men who make the Minister of the Interior in the Rue de Grenelle say, "We have got a good prefect at Besancon." This prefect read the letter, and, according to request, burned it.

Rosalie wanted to make Albert lose his election, in order to keep him for five years more at Besancon.

The elections were at that time a party struggle, and, in order to triumph, the minister chose his ground in choosing the moment of the contest. Accordingly, the elections would not take place before the end of three months. When a man's whole life depends upon an election, the time which elapses between the decree for the convocation of the electoral colleges and the day fixed for their operations is a time during which his ordinary life is suspended. And Rosalie well understood how much latitude the preoccupations of Albert during these months would leave her. She obtained from Mariette, whom, as she afterward confessed, she promised to take into her service, as well as Jerome, to deliver to her the letters sent by Albert to Italy, and the letters for him that came from that country. And all the time she was executing these plans this astonishing girl was making slippers for her father, with the most innocent air in the world. She even redoubled her candor and innocence, knowing all the effect of her candid and innocent looks.

"My daughter grows charming," said the Baroness de Watteville.

Two months before the elections, a meeting was held at the house of Monsieur Boucher, senior, composed of the contractor (who was looking forward to the works of the bridge and the Arcier water supply), of the father-in-law of Monsieur Boucher, of Monsieur Granel (the influential man to whom Savarus had rendered a service, and who was to propose him as a candidate), of the attorney Girardet, of the printer of the "Revue de l'Est," and of the president of the Tribunal of Commerce. In short, this meeting comprised twenty-seven of those personages called in the provinces "big wigs." Each of them represented an average of six votes; but, on reckoning them, they were taken as ten, for people always begin by exaggerating to themselves their own influence. Among these twenty-seven persons, one belonged to the prefect, some false friend who wanted a favor from the minister for his friends or himself. At this first meeting it was agreed to choose the barrister Savaron for candidate, with an enthusiasm nobody could have hoped for in Besancon.

While waiting at home for Alfred Boucher to come and fetch him, Albert chatted with the Abbé de Grancey, who was interested in this immense ambition. Albert had recognized the enormous political capacity of the priest, and the priest, moved by the prayers of the young man, had consented to act as his guide and counsel in this supreme struggle. The chapter did not like Monsieur de Chavoncourt; for the brother-in-law of his wife, who was president of the tribunal, had caused the loss of the famous suit in the first stage.

"You are betrayed, my dear child," said the astute and respectable abbé, in that soft, calm voice habitual to aged priests.

"Betrayed!" exclaimed the lover, struck to the heart.

"And by whom I know not," replied the priest. "The prefecture is acquainted with your plans, and looks over your hand. For the moment I can give you no advice. Such affairs as this require consideration. As to this evening, at this meeting anticipate the attacks that will be made on you. Relate all your former life; you will thus diminish the effect that this discovery would produce on the Bisontines."

"Oh, I expected this!" said Savarus, in a broken voice.

"You would not profit by my advice. You had the opportunity of appearing at the Hôtel de Rupt. You don't know what you would have gained."

"What?"

"The unanimity of the Royalists: a momentary agreement to go to the elections; in short, more than a hundred votes. By adding to these what we call

among ourselves the ecclesiastical votes, you would have been not yet elected, but sure of the election by ballot. In such a case, you parley; you progress."

On entering, Alfred Boucher, who announced the decision of the preliminary meeting with great enthusiasm, found the vicar-general and the advocate cold, calm, and grave.

"Adieu, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Albert; "we will go into your affair more thoroughly after the elections."

And the advocate took Alfred's arm, after having significantly pressed the hand of Monsieur de Grancey. The priest looked at this ambitious man, whose face wore the sublime air of a general catching the sound of the first cannon-shot of the battle. He lifted his eyes to heaven, and said to himself on leaving, "What a splendid priest he would make!"

Eloquence is not to be found at the bar. Seldom does the advocate put forth the full powers of his soul, otherwise he would perish in a few years. Eloquence is seldom to be found in the pulpit in these days; but it is to be found in certain sittings of the Chamber of Deputies, when the ambitious man risks all or nothing, or, stung by a thousand darts, breaks out at a given moment. And it is still to be found, assuredly, in certain privileged beings in the fatal crisis when their pretensions are about to fail or succeed, and when they are obliged to speak. And so, at this meeting, Albert Savarus, feeling the necessity of making himself faithful followers, developed all the faculties of his soul, all the resources of his mind. He entered the room well, without awkwardness or arrogance, without weakness or timidity, but with gravity, and found himself, without surprise, in the midst of upward of thirty persons. The rumor of the meeting and its decision had already attracted some docile sheep to the fold. Before listening to Monsieur Boucher, who wanted to deliver a speech respecting the resolution of the Boucher committee, Albert demanded silence by making signs and pressing the hand of Monsieur Boucher, as if to warn him of suddenly arisen danger.

"My young friend Alfred Boucher has just announced to me the honor you have done me; but, before this decision becomes final," said the advocate, "I think it my duty to explain to you what your candidate is, in order to leave you still free to withdraw your promises if my declarations disturb your conscience."

This exordium had the effect of causing a profound silence to reign around. Some people considered the movement very noble.

Albert explained his former life, announcing his real name and his employment under the Restoration, declaring himself a new man since his arrival at Besancon, and pledging himself for the future. This improvisation, they say, kept all the audience breathless. These men, whose interests were so opposite, were all subjugated by the admirable eloquence which sprang boiling from the heart and soul of this ambitious man. Admiration prevented all reflection. They only understood one thing, the thing that Albert wanted to get into their heads.

Was it not better for a city to be represented by one of those men destined to govern society, than by a mere voting machine? A statesman is himself a power; an ordinary, but incorruptible, deputy is only a conscience. What a glory for Provence to have discovered Mirabeau—to have returned, after 1830, the only statesman produced by the Revolution of July!

Under the pressure of this eloquence, all the auditors believed in its power to become a magnificent political instrument in their representative. They all saw Savarus the minister in Albert Savaron. Divining the secret calculations of his hearers, the skillful candidate gave them to understand that they would acquire, themselves in the first place, the right of making use of his influence.

This profession of faith, this declaration of ambition, this account of his life and character, was, according to the only man capable of judging Savarus, and who has since become one of the notabilities of Besancon, a masterpiece of skill, of sentiment, of warmth, of interest, and of se-

duction. This whirlwind carried away the electors. Never did man have such a triumph. But, unfortunately, speech, a sort of weapon forclose quarters, has only an immediate effect. Reflection destroys oratory when oratory has not triumphed over reflection. If they had voted then and there, assuredly the name of Albert would have leaped from the urn. For the moment, he was the conqueror. But he had to conquer like this every day for two months. Albert went away panting for breath. Applauded by the Bisontines, he had obtained the grand result of killing in advance the damaging remarks to which his antecedents might give rise. The trade of Besancon constituted the barrister Savaron de Savarus its candidate. The enthusiasm of Alfred Boucher, contagious at first, would, in the long run, become embarrassing.

The prefect, alarmed at this success, began to reckon up the number of the ministerial votes, and contrived to procure a secret interview with Monsieur de Chavoncourt, in order to coalesce with common interest. Every day, and without Albert being able to discover how, the votes of the Boucher committee diminished. A month before the election, Albert found himself with scarcely sixty votes. Nothing could resist the slow operations of the prefecture. Three or four clever men said to the clients of Savarus, "Will the deputy plead and win your causes? Will he give you his advice? Will he draw your deeds and agreements? You will make him your slave for five years longer if, instead of sending him to the Chamber, you only give him the hope of getting there in five years' time." This calculation was all the more injurious to Savarus that it had already been made by some of the merchant's wives. The persons interested in the affair of the bridge and the Arcier water did not resist a conference with an adroit ministerial, who proved to them that the protection for them was the prefecture, and not an adventurer. Every day was a defeat for Albert, although every day was a battle, planned by him, but carried out by his lieutenants—a battle of words, of speeches, of maneuvers. He dared not go to the vicar-general's, and the vicar-general did not make his appearance. Albert got up and went to bed in a fever, with his brain on fire.

At length arrived the day of the first contest, what is called a preliminary meeting, at which the votes are counted, at which the candidates calculate their chances, and at which the skillful can foresee their fall or their success. It is a decorous *hustings* scene, without the populace, but terrible. The emotions, if they do not find physical expression as in England, are none the less profound. The English manage matters by force of fists; in France they are managed by force of phrases. Our neighbors have a battle; the French risk their fate on cold combinations elaborated with care. This political proceeding is carried on in a style inverse to the character of the two nations.

The Radical party had its candidate; Monsieur de Chavoncourt came forward; and then came Albert, who was accused by the Radicals and by the Chavoncourt committee of being an uncompromising member of the Right, a double of Berryer. The ministry had its candidate, a devoted man, made use of to keep the pure ministerial votes together. The votes, thus divided, came to no result. The Republican candidate had twenty votes, the ministry mustered fifty, Albert counted seventy, Monsieur de Chavoncourt obtained sixty-seven. But the perfidious prefecture had made thirty of its most devoted supporters vote for Albert, in order to deceive its antagonist. The voters for Monsieur de Chavoncourt, combined with the eighty real voters for the perfecture, became masters of the election, if the perfect could only win over a few votes from the Radical party. A hundred and sixty votes were wanting, those of Monsieur de Grancey and the Legitimists. A preliminary meeting at the elections is what a general rehearsal is at the theater, the most deceitful thing in the world.

Albert Savarus returned home, keeping a good countenance, but death struck.

He had had the sense, the genius, or the luck to win over, during the last fortnight, two devoted adherents—the father-in-law of Girardet, and a very cunning old merchant to whom he was sent by Monsieur de Grancey. These two good men became his spies—passed themselves off as the most ardent enemies of Savarus in the opposing camps. Toward the end of the preparatory sitting, they informed Savarus, through the medium of Monsieur Boucher, that thirty unknown voters were carrying on against him, in his own party, the devices which they were exercising on his account among the others.

A criminal going to execution does not suffer what Albert suffered on returning home from the hall in which his fate had been put to the test. The despairing lover would allow no one to accompany him. He walked alone through the streets, between eleven and twelve. At one in the morning, Albert, from whom for three nights sleep had fled, was seated in his library in a Voltaire chair, his face as pale as if he were about to expire, his hands drooping in an attitude of abandonment worthy of a Magdalen. Tears hung in his long eyelashes, those tears which wet the eyes but do not run down the cheek; intense thought absorbs them, the fires of the soul devour them. Alone he could weep. He perceived then, in the kiosk, a white form which reminded him of Francesca.

"And it is three months since I have received a letter from *her!* What has become of her? I have been two months without writing to her, but I gave her notice of it. Is she ill? O my love! O my life! will you ever know what I have suffered? What a fatal organization is mine! Have I got an aneurism?" he asked himself, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulsations resounded through the silence like light grains of sand falling on a big drum.

At this moment three discreet knocks were heard on Albert's door. He immediately went to open it, and almost swooned with joy on seeing the vicar-general with a joyous air, an air of triumph. He seized the Abbé de Grancey, without saying a word, held him in his arms, embraced him, and allowed his head to fall on the shoulder of the old man; and he became a child again—he wept as he had wept on learning that Francesca Soderini was married. He exhibited his weakness only to this priest, whose face was radiant with the dawn of hope. The priest had been sublime, and as astute as sublime.

"Pardon, dear abbé, but you come at one of those moments when a man gives way—for do not believe that mine is a vulgar ambition."

"Yes, I know," replied the abbé; "you have written 'Love's Ambition!' Ah! my child, it was a hopeless love that made a priest of me in 1786, at two and twenty. In 1788 I was a curé. I know what life is. I have already refused three bishoprics; I wish to die at Besançon."

"Come and see *her*," exclaimed Savarus, taking the candle and showing the abbé into the magnificent cabinet, in which was placed the portrait of the Duchess d'Argaiolo, which he lighted up.

"She is one of those women who are born to reign!" said the vicar, comprehending all the affection Albert showed him by this mute confidence. "But there is a host of pride on that brow; it is implacable. She would never forgive an injury! She is an archangel Michael, the angel of judgment, the inflexible angel. 'All or nothing' is the motto of those angelic characters. There is something divinely untamed in this countenance."

"You have imagined her exactly," exclaimed Savarus. "But, my dear abbé, for more than twelve years she has reigned over my life, and I have not a thought with which to reproach myself."

"Ah! if you had done as much for God," said the abbé with simplicity. "Let us talk about your affairs. For the last ten days I have been at work for you. If you are really a politician, you will follow my counsels this time. You would not be in your present position, if you had gone when I told you to the Hôtel de Rupt; but you will go to-morrow. I shall introduce you to-night. The estate of the Rouxeys is threatened; you must

plead in two days. The election will not take place for three days. They will take care not to complete the organization of the *bureaux* the first day; we shall have several scrutinies, and you will come in at the final ballot."

"And how?"

"By winning the cause of the Rouxeys, you will get eighty Legitimist votes; add them to the thirty votes of which I can dispose, and we get to a hundred and ten. Now, as there still remain to you twenty of the Boucher committee, you will possess altogether a hundred and thirty."

"Well," said Albert, "we want seventy-five more."

"Yes," said the priest, "for all the rest belong to the ministry. But, my child, you have got two hundred votes, and the ministry has only a hundred and eighty."

"I have got two hundred votes?" said Albert, who remained stupefied with astonishment, after having started to his feet as if shot up by a spring.

"You have the votes of Monsieur de Chavoncourt," replied the abbé.

"And how?"

"You marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt."

"Never!"

"You marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," repeated the priest, coldly.

"But see! she is implacable," said Albert, pointing to Francesca.

"You marry Mademoiselle de Chavoncourt," repeated the priest, calmly, for the third time.

This time Albert understood. The vicar-general would not implicate himself in the plan which found favor at last with this politician driven to despair. A word more would have compromised the dignity and probity of the priest.

"You will find to-morrow at the Hôtel de Rupt Madame de Chavoncourt and her second daughter. You will thank her for what she is about to do for you; you will tell her that your gratitude is boundless—that you belong to her, body and soul. Are not your future interests henceforward those of her family? You are disinterested; you have so much confidence in yourself that you look upon a nomination as deputy as a sufficient marriage portion. You will have a combat with Madame de Chavoncourt; she will try to make you pledge yourself. In this evening, my son, is your whole future. But, understand, I have nothing to do with it; I am only responsible for the Legitimist votes. I have won over for you Madame de Watteville, and that means all the aristocracy of Besancon. Amédée de Soulas and Vauchelles, who will vote for you, have brought over the young people; Madame de Watteville will get you the old ones. As for my votes, they are infallible."

"Who has influenced Madame de Chavoncourt, then?" asked Savarus.

"Do not question me," replied the abbé. "Monsieur de Chavoncourt, who has got three daughters to marry, is incapable of augmenting his fortune. If Vauchelles marries the first without a portion, on account of the old aunt, who will finance the marriage contract, what is to be done with the two others? Sidonie is sixteen, and you have treasures in your ambition. Some one has said to Madame de Chavoncourt that it would be better to marry her daughter than to send her husband to waste money at Paris. This some one manages Madame de Chavoncourt, and Madame de Chavoncourt manages her husband."

"Enough, dear abbé, I understand. Once elected, I shall have some one's fortune to make, and by making it a splendid one I shall be released from my word. You have in me a son, a man who will owe you all his happiness. My God! what have I done to deserve so much real friendship?"

"You have procured the triumph of the chapter," said the vicar-general, with a smile. "Now, keep all this as secret as the tomb. We are nothing; we do nothing. If they knew that we meddled with the elections, we should be eaten up raw by the puritans of the Left, who do worse, and blamed by some of our own side, who want everything. Madame de Chavoncourt does not suspect my participation

in all this. I have only confided in Madame de Watteville, on whom we may rely as on ourselves."

"I will bring you the duchess for you to give us your blessing!" exclaimed the votary of ambition.

After having shown out the old priest, Albert retired to rest in the cradle of power.

At nine o'clock in the evening of the next day, as every one may imagine, the salons of Madame the Baroness de Watteville were filled with the Bisontine aristocracy, specially convoked. The *exception* of taking part in the elections to please the daughter of the De Rupts was being discussed. It was known that the former *maître des requêtes*, the secretary of one of the most faithful ministers of the elder branch, was to be introduced. Madame de Chavoncourt had come with her second daughter, Sidonie, divinely dressed; while the eldest, sure of her suitor, had not had recourse to any of the artifices of the toilet. The Abbé de Grancey showed his fine noble countenance from group to group, listening, and apparently meddling in nothing, but uttering those incisive phrases which sum up and decide the question.

"If the elder branch returns," said he to an old statesman of seventy, "what politicians will it find? Alone on his bench, Berryer does not know what to do; if he had sixty supporters, he would be able to embarrass the Government on a great many occasions, and might upset ministries! They are going to elect the Duke de Fitz-James at Toulouse. You will make Monsieur de Watteville gain his cause. If you vote for Monsieur de Savarus, the Republicans will vote with you rather than with the *juste milieu*," etc., etc.

At nine o'clock, Albert had not arrived. Madame de Watteville was disposed to consider such tardiness an insult.

"Dear baroness," said Madame de Chavoncourt, "do not let us make such serious affairs depend on a trifle. A varnished boot that is a long while drying—or perhaps a consultation detains Monsieur de Savarus."

Rosalie gave Madame de Chavoncourt a queer look.

"She is very kind to Monsieur de Savarus," she whispered to her mother.

"Because," replied the baroness, with a smile, "there is a marriage on foot between Sidonie and Monsieur de Savarus."

Mademoiselle de Watteville suddenly moved toward a window which looked on to the garden.

At ten o'clock, Albert de Savarus still had not appeared. The storm which had been rumbling burst. Some of the nobles sat down to play, finding the state of things intolerable. The Abbé de Grancey, who did not know what to think, went toward the window in which Rosalie was hidden, and said aloud, in his extreme stupefaction, "He must be dead." The vicar-general went out into the garden, followed by Monsieur de Watteville and his daughter, and they all three went up to the kiosk. Everything was shut up at Albert's; no light was visible.

"Jerome!" cried Rosalie, seeing the servant in the courtyard.

The Abbé de Grancey looked at her with astonishment.

"Where is your master?" said she to the servant, who had come to the foot of the wall.

"Gone away in a post-chaise, mademoiselle."

"He is lost," exclaimed the Abbé de Grancey, "or happy!"

The joy of triumph was not well enough suppressed on Rosalie's countenance for the vicar-general not to divine it, but he feigned not to notice anything.

"What can this young girl have had to do with all this?" the priest asked himself.

They all three returned to the salons, when Monsieur de Watteville announced the strange, the singular, the astounding news of the departure of the barrister Albert Savaron de Savarus in a post-chaise, without any one knowing the motives of this disappearance. At half-past eleven, there remained only fifteen persons, among whom were Madame de Chavoncourt and the Abbé de Godenars

(another vicar-general, a man of about forty who wanted to be a bishop), the two young Misses de Chavoncourt and Monsieur de Vauchelles, the Abbé de Grancey, Rosalie, Amédée de Soulas, and a retired functionary, one of the most influential personages of the high society of Besancon, who took a great interest in the election of Albert Savarus. The Abbé de Grancey placed himself by the side of the baroness in order to look at Rosalie, whose face, generally pale, now showed a feverish color.

"What can have happened to Monsieur de Savarus?" asked Madame de Chavoncourt.

At this moment, a servant in livery brought a letter on a silver waiter to the Abbé de Grancey.

"Read it," said the baroness.

The vicar-general read the letter, and saw Rosalie suddenly turn as white as her handkerchief.

"She recognizes the writing," he said to himself, after having given the young girl a look over his spectacles. He folded up the letter and coolly put it in his pocket without saying a word. In three minutes he received from Rosalie three looks which sufficed to tell him all. "She loves Albert Savarus!" thought the vicar-general. He got up, bowed, took a few steps toward the door, and in the second salon he was rejoined by Rosalie, who said to him—"

"Monsieur de Grancey, it is from *Albert!*"

"How can you know his writing well enough to distinguish it so far off?"

The young girl, caught in the depths of her impatience and her passion, gave an answer the abbé thought sublime.

"Because I love him! What is the matter?" she said, after a pause.

"He abandons his election," replied the abbé.

Rosalie placed her finger on her lips. "I claim the secrecy of a confession," said she, before entering the salon. "If there is no election, there will be no marriage with Sidonie!"

The next morning, while going to mass, Mademoiselle de Watteville learned from Mariette part of the circumstances which had caused the disappearance of Albert at the most critical moment of his life. "Mademoiselle, in the morning there arrived at the Hôtel National, from Paris, an old gentleman in his own carriage—a handsome carriage, with four horses, an outrider, and a servant. In fact, Jerome, who saw the carriage when it was going away, maintains that he could only have been a prince or a milord."

"Was there a closed coronet on the carriage?" said Rosalie.

"I do not know," said Mariette. "While it was striking two, he came to Monsieur Savarus's house and sent up his card; and, on seeing it, monsieur, Jerome says, turned as white as a sheet, and told them to show him in. As he locked the door himself, it is impossible to know what the old gentleman and the barrister said to each other, but they remained together about an hour; after which the old gentleman, accompanied by the barrister, called up the servant. Jerome saw this servant go out with an immense parcel, four feet long, which looked like a large sheet of canvas. The old gentleman had a large bundle of papers in his hands. The barrister, paler than if he were dying—he who is so proud and so dignified—was in a pitiable state. But he behaved so respectfully to the old gentleman that he could not have been more ceremonious with the king. Jerome and Monsieur Albert Savaron accompanied this old man to his carriage, which was all ready, with its four horses harnessed. The courier started on the stroke of three. Monsieur went straight to the prefecture, and from there to Monsieur Gentillet's, who sold him the old traveling carriage of the late Madame de Saint Vier; then he ordered post horses at six o'clock. He went home again to pack up; no doubt, he wrote several letters; finally, he arranged all his affairs with Monsieur Girardet, who came and stayed till seven o'clock. Jerome took a note to Monsieur Boucher's, where monsieur was expected to dinner; and then, at half-past seven,

the barrister went away, leaving Jerome three month's wages, and telling him to look for a place. He left his keys with Monsieur Girardet, whom he accompanied home, and where, Jerome says, he had some soup, for Monsieur Girardet had not dined at half-past seven. When Monsieur Savaron got into his carriage again, he was like a corpse. Jerome, who naturally saluted his master, heard him say to the postilion, 'The Geneva road.'"

"Did Jerome inquire the stranger's name at the Hôtel National?"

"As the old gentleman was only passing through, they did not ask him for it. The servant, no doubt according to orders, did not seem to be able to speak French."

"And the letter the Abbe de Grancey received so late?" said Rosalie.

"It was, no doubt, Monsieur Girardet who must have sent it to him; but Jerome says that poor Monsieur Girardet, who is very fond of the barrister Savaron, was quite as much upset as he. He who came with mystery goes away with mystery, Mademoiselle Galard says."

From the date of this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville had a pensive and abstracted air, which was visible to all the world. It is needless to speak of the sensation the disappearance of the barrister Savaron caused in Besancon. It was known that the prefect had consented, with the best grace in the world, to send him immediately a foreign passport, for by this means he got rid of his only adversary. The next day, Monsieur de Chavoncourt was at once elected by a majority of a hundred and forty votes.

"Jean went away as he came," said an elector, on learning the flight of Albert Savaron.

This event served to fortify the prejudices which exist at Besancon against strangers, and which, two years before, had been corroborated with regard to the affair of the Republican journal; and in ten days afterward no more was heard about Albert de Savarus. Three persons only, the attorney Girardet, the vicar-general, and Rosalie, were seriously affected by this disappearance. Girardet knew that the stranger with white hair was the Prince Soderini, for he had seen his card, and he told the vicar-general; but Rosalie, much better informed than they, had known for three months the news of the death of the Duke d'Argaiolo.

In the month of April, 1836, nobody had had any news or heard anything of Monsieur Albert de Savarus. Jerome and Mariette were about to be married, but the baroness confidentially told her maid to wait until the marriage of her daughter, and then the two ceremonies could take place together.

"It is time to get Rosalie married," said the baroness one day to Monsieur de Watteville; "she is nineteen, and she has altered terribly the last few months."

"I don't know what is the matter with her," said the baron.

"When fathers do not know what is the matter with their daughters, mothers guess it," said the baroness. "We must marry her."

"I am quite willing," said the baron; "and, for my part, I will give her the Rouxeys, now that the tribunal has arranged matters between us and the commune of the Riceys by fixing my boundaries at three hundred mètres from the foot of the Dent de Vilard. They are digging a dyke to receive all the water and carry it into the lake. The commune has not appealed, and the judgment is final."

"You have not yet guessed," said the baroness, "that this judgment costs me thirty thousand francs, which I had to give to Chantonnil. That is all this peasant wanted; he appears to win the cause for his commune, and he sells us peace. If you give away the Rouxeys, you will have nothing left," said the baroness.

"I don't want much," said the baron; "I am going fast."

"You eat like an ogre."

"Exactly so. It is no use eating; I feel my legs getting weaker and weaker."

"That is from turning," said the baroness.

"I don't know," said the baron.

"We will marry Rosalie to Monsieur de Soulas. If you give her the Rouxeys, reserve to yourself a life interest; I will

give them fifteen thousand francs a year in the funds. Our children will live here, and I do not see that they will be much to be pitied."

"No, I will give them the Rouxeys altogether. Rosalie is fond of the Rouxeys."

"You are very odd with your daughter! You do not ask me if I am fond of the Rouxeys."

Rosalie, summoned on the spot, learned that she was to marry Monsieur Amédée de Soulas in the early part of the month of May.

"I thank you, mother, and you, father, for having thought of my settlement, but I do not wish to be married. I am very happy to stay with you."

"A mere excuse!" said the baroness. "You do not like Monsieur the Count de Soulas; that is all."

"If you wish to know the truth, I will never marry Monsieur de Soulas."

"Oh! the never of a girl of nineteen!" said the baroness, with a bitter smile.

"The never of Mademoiselle de Watteville," replied Rosalie, with a firm accent. "My father does not intend, I think, to marry me without my consent?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" said the poor baron, looking affectionately at his daughter.

"Oh! well," answered the baroness, sharply, restraining the rage of a devotee surprised at seeing herself unexpectedly defied, "take on yourself, Monsieur de Watteville, to provide for your daughter. Think on it well, mademoiselle; if you do not marry according to my wishes, you will get nothing from me for your establishment."

The quarrel thus commenced between Madame de Watteville and the baron, who supported his daughter, went so far that Rosalie and her father were obliged to spend the fine season at the Rouxeys—living in the Hôtel de Rupt became insupportable to them. It became known then in Besancon that Mademoiselle de Watteville had positively refused Monsieur the Count de Soulas. After their marriage, Jerome and Mariette went to the Rouxeys, to succeed Modinier some day. The baron repaired and restored the hermitage according to the taste of his daughter. On learning that these repairs had cost about sixty thousand francs, that Rosalie and her father were building a hot-house, the baroness recognized a certain leaven of cunning in her daughter. The baron bought several adjoining pieces of ground, and a small estate of the value of thirty thousand francs. Madame de Watteville was told that, away from her, Rosalie showed herself a superior girl; she studied the means of improving the Rouxeys, had a habit made, and rode on horseback. Her father, whose happiness she studied, who complained no longer of his health, and got fat, accompanied her in her rides. On the approach of the *fete* of the baroness, who was named Louise, the vicar-general came to the Rouxeys, no doubt sent by Madame de Watteville and Monsieur de Soulas to negotiate a peace between the mother and daughter.

"That little Rosalie has got a head on her shoulders," they said in Besancon.

After having nobly paid the ninety thousand francs expended on the Rouxeys, the baroness remitted to her husband about a thousand francs a month to live there. She did not want to put herself in the wrong. The father and daughter were perfectly willing to return to Besancon on the 15th of August, to stay then until the end of the month. When the vicar-general took Rosalie aside, after dinner, to open the question of the marriage, giving her to understand that she must not reckon any longer on Albert, of whom nothing had been heard for a year, he was cut short by a gesture from Rosalie. This eccentric girl seized Monsieur de Grancey by the arm, and led him to a seat under a clump of rhododendrons, from which the lake was visible.

"Listen, dear abbé—you whom I love as much as my father, for you have shown your affection for my Albert—I must at last confess it. I have committed crimes to become his wife, and he must be my husband. Look here! Read this."

She held out to him a number of the "Gazette" which she had in the pocket of her apron, pointing to the following ar-

ticle under the heading of Florence, the 25th of May:—

"The marriage of His Grace the Duke de Rhetoré, eldest son of His Grace the Duke de Chaulieu, late ambassador, with Her Grace the Duchess d'Argaiolo, Princess Soderini by birth, was celebrated with great splendor. The numerous entertainments given on the occasion of this marriage still enliven the city of Florence. The fortune of the Duchess d'Argaiolo is one of the most considerable in Italy, the late duke having left her his universal legatee."

"The woman he loved is married," said she. "I separated them!"

"You! And how?" said the abbé.

Rosalie was about to answer, when a loud cry, uttered by two gardeners and preceded by the sound of a body falling into the water, interrupted her. She got up and ran off, exclaiming, "Oh, my father!" She could see nothing of the baron.

Wishing to get at a fragment of granite in which he thought he could perceive the print of a shell, a fact which would have upset some system of geology, Monsieur de Watteville had got on the sloping bank, lost his equilibrium, and rolled into the lake, whose greatest depth was naturally at the foot of the causeway. The gardeners had infinite trouble to get a pole within the baron's reach by beating about the spot where the water was bubbling; but at last they dragged him out, covered with mud, into which he had sunk very deeply, and got all the deeper into by his struggles. Monsieur de Watteville had dined copiously; digestion had commenced, and it was interrupted. When he had been undressed, washed, and put to bed, he was in a state so visibly dangerous, that two servants got on horseback and went off, one to Besancon, the other to fetch the nearest doctor. When Madame de Watteville arrived, eight hours after the accident, with the first surgeons and physicians of Besancon, they found Monsieur de Watteville in a desperate state, notwithstanding the judicious treatment of the doctor of the Rouxeys. Fear had caused a serious effusion on the brain, and the interrupted digestion had completed the destruction of the poor baron.

This death, which would not have taken place, said Madame de Watteville, if her husband had remained at Besancon, was attributed by her to the resistance of her daughter, to whom she took an aversion, giving herself up to a grief and regret evidently exaggerated. She called the baron *her dear lamb!* The last Watteville was buried on an isle in the lake of the Rouxeys, where the baroness erected a small Gothic monument in white marble, similar to that of Heloise at Père-la-Chaise.

A month after this event, the baroness and her daughter were living at the Hôtel de Rupt in somber silence. Rosalie was a prey to serious remorse, which did not show itself outwardly; she accused herself of the death of her father, and suspected another misfortune, still greater in her eyes, and very certainly her work—for neither the attorney Girardet, nor the Abbé de Grancey, had been able to procure any information as to the fate of Albert. This silence was fearful. In a paroxysm of repentance, she felt compelled to reveal to the vicar-general the horrible contrivances by which she had separated Albert and Francesca. It was very simple and very formidable. Mademoiselle de Watteville had suppressed the letters of Albert to the duchess, and the one in which Francesca announced to her lover the illness of her husband, telling him that she would not be able to answer him during the time that she should devote, as was her duty, to the dying man.

Accordingly, during the time that Albert was engrossed in the elections, the duchess had only written two letters to him—that in which she informed him of the danger of the Duke d'Argaiolo, and that in which she told him she was a widow—two noble and sublime letters, which Rosalie kept. After having practiced for several nights, she had succeeded in perfectly imitating Albert's writing. For the real letters of this faithful lover she had substituted three letters, the drafts of which, exhibited to the old

priest, made him shudder, so thoroughly did the genius of evil appear in all its perfection. Rosalie, holding the pen of Albert, prepared the duchess for the change in the Frenchman, apparently false, and she replied to the news of the death of the Duke d'Argaiolo by the news of the coming marriage of Albert with Mademoiselle de Watteville. The two letters would cross each other, and did cross each other. The infernal skill with which the letters were written so surprised the vicar-general that he read them over again. To the last, Francesca, wounded to the heart by a girl who wished to kill the love of her rival, had answered in these simple words: "*You are free. Farewell!*"

"Purely moral crimes, which give no hold to human justice, are the most infamous and the most odious," said the Abbé de Grancey severely. "God often punishes them here below, and that is the reason of the frightful misfortunes which appear inexplicable to us. Of all the secret crimes enshrouded in the mystery of private life, one of the most dishonorable is that of breaking the seal of a letter, or surreptitiously reading it. Every person, whoever it may be, and by whatever motive impelled, who ventures on such an act, has cast an ineffaceable stain on his or her honor. Can you comprehend the touching and divine story of the young page, falsely accused, and carrying a letter in which is the order for his death, who sets out on his way without an evil thought, and whom Providence takes under His protection and saves miraculously, as we say? Do you know in what the miracle consists? Virtue has a halo as powerful as that of innocent childhood. I tell you these things without wishing to admonish you," said the old priest to Rosalie, with profound sadness. "Alas! I am not now the grand penitentiary; you are not kneeling at the feet of God: I am a friend terrified at the apprehension of your punishment. What has become of poor Albert? Has he not killed himself? He concealed an unheard-of violence under his affected calmness. I comprehend that the old Prince Soderini, the father of the Duchess d'Argaiolo, came to demand the letters and portraits of his daughter. That was the thunderbolt that fell on Albert's head, who, no doubt, went to endeavor to justify himself. But how is it that, in fourteen months, he has sent us no news?"

"Oh, if I marry him, he will be so happy!"

"Happy? He does not love you. Besides, you will not have such a very large fortune to bring him. Your mother has the most profound aversion for you; you gave her a savage answer, which wounded her and will ruin you, when she told you yesterday that obedience was the only means of repairing your faults, and reminded you of the necessity of marrying, and mentioned Amédée. 'If you are so found of him, marry him yourself, mother!'—did you or did you not say this to her face?"

"Yes," said Rosalie.

"Well, I know her," resumed Monsieur de Grancey. "In a few months she will be Countess de Soulas. She will certainly have children; she will give forty thousand francs a year to Monsieur de Soulas; she will give him further advantages, and reduce your interest in her property, as much as she can. You will be poor all her life, and she is only thirty-eight! Your whole property will consist of the estate of the Rouxeys, and the few rights the liquidation of your father's succession may leave you, if, indeed, your mother consents to give up her claims on the Rouxeys. You have already managed affairs very badly with regard to the material interests of your life; with regard to the sentimental, I consider it entirely unhinged. Instead of coming to your mother—"

Rosalie made a fierce movement of the head.

"To your mother," continued the vicar-general, "and to religion, who, on the first movement of your heart, would have enlightened, counseled, and guided you, you have endeavored to act alone, ignorant of life and only listening to passion!"

These words of wisdom alarmed Made-

moiselle de Watteville. "But what shall I do?" said she, after a pause.

"In order to make reparation for your faults, we must know the extent of them," replied the abbé.

"Well, then, I will write to the only man who could have any knowledge of the fate of Albert—to Monsieur Léopold Hannequin, a notary at Paris, the friend of his youth."

"Do not write any more, except to render homage to the truth," replied the vicar-general. "Confide to me the true letters and the false ones; explain everything to me in detail, as you would to the director of your conscience, leaving me to find the means of expiating your faults, and relying upon me. I will see— But, above all, restore to this unfortunate man his innocence toward the being whom he has made his deity on this earth. For, after having lost his happiness, Albert must still be anxious for his justification."

Rosalie promised to obey the Abbé de Grancey, hoping that his proceedings might perhaps result in restoring Albert to her.

A short time after the confession of Mademoiselle de Watteville, a clerk of Monsieur Léopold Hannequin's came to Besancon, provided with a power of attorney from Albert, and went straight to Monsieur Girardet's, to request him to sell the house belonging to Monsieur Savaron.

The attorney undertook the business out of regard for the barrister. The clerk sold the furniture and was able to pay off with the proceeds what Albert owed Girardet, who, at the time of the inexplicable departure, had advanced him five thousand francs, undertaking also to get in what was owing to him. When Girardet asked what had become of this noble and valiant athlete, in whom he had taken so much interest, the clerk answered that nobody knew but his principal, and that the notary had appeared very much affected by the contents of the last letter written by Monsieur Albert de Savarus.

On learning this news, the vicar-general wrote to Léopold. Here is the answer of the worthy notary:—

"*A Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, vicar-general of the diocese of Besançon.*

"Paris.

"Alas! sir, it is not in the power of any one to restore Albert to the life of the world. He has renounced it. He is a novice at the Great Chartreuse, near Grenoble. You know still better than I, who have just learned it, that everything dies on the threshold of this cloister. Foreseeing my visit, Albert interposed the general of the Carthusians between all my efforts and himself. I know this noble heart well enough to be certain that he is the victim of an odious plot, invisible to us. But all is over. Madame the Duchess d'Argaiolo, now Duchess de Rhetoré, seems to have carried her cruelty very far. At Belgirate, where she was no longer to be found when Albert reached there, she had left orders to lead him to believe that she was living in London. From London, Albert went to seek for the duchess at Naples; from Naples, to Rome, where she became engaged to the Duke de Rhetoré. When Albert did meet Madame d'Argaiolo, it was at Florence, at the moment of the celebration of her marriage. Our poor friend fainted away in the church, and has never been able, even when his life was in danger, to obtain an explanation from this woman, whose heart must be made of something inhuman. Albert traveled for seven months in search of a barbarous creature who took a pleasure in escaping from him. He neither knew where nor how to catch her. I saw our poor friend on his passage through Paris, and if you had seen him as I did, you would have perceived that not a word must be said on the subject of the duchess, unless you wished to bring on a crisis in which his reason would have been in danger. If he had known his crime, he might have found the means of justification; but, falsely accused of being married, what could he do? Albert is dead, quite dead, to the world. He wished for repose; let us hope that the profound silence and

prayer into which he has thrown himself may insure his happiness in another form. If you knew him, sir, you must pity him deeply, and also pity his friends.—Receive," etc.

Immediately on the receipt of this letter, the good vicar-general wrote to the general of the Carthusians, and this was the answer from Albert Savarus :

"*Brother Albert to Monsieur l'Abbé de Grancey, Vicar-general of the diocese of Besancon.*

"From the Great Chartreuse.

"I recognize, dear and much loved vicar-general, your kind disposition and still youthful heart in everything that the reverend father the general of our order has just communicated to me. You have divined the only wish that remained in the innermost recess of my heart relative to the things of this world—to have justice done to my sentiments by her who has so ill-treated me! But, in leaving me at liberty to make use of your offer, the general wished to know whether my vocation was firm. He had the signal kindness to tell me so on seeing me decided to maintain an absolute silence in this respect. If I had given way to the temptation of rehabilitating the man of the world, the monk would have been dismissed from the monastery. Grace was certainly manifested; but, although short, the combat was none the less sharp nor cruel. Is not that saying clearly enough that I cannot re-enter the world? And the pardon you ask of me for the author of so many evils is full and entire, without a thought of ill-will. I will pray to God to pardon this young lady, as I pardon her, just as I shall pray Him to grant a happy life to Madame de Rhetoré.

"Ah! whether it be death or the self-willed hand of a young girl determined on making herself loved, or whether it be one of those blows attributed to chance, must we not always obey God? Misfortune creates in some souls a vast desert in which the Divine Voice resounds. I have discovered too late the relations between this life and that which awaits us; I am thoroughly wornout. I could not have served in the ranks of the Church militant, and I cast the remains of a life almost extinguished at the foot of the sanctuary. This is the last time I shall write. Only you, who loved me and whom I loved so much, could have made me break the law of oblivion that I imposed on myself on entering the metropolis of Saint Bruno, but you are always particularly named in the prayers of

"BROTHER ALBERT.

"November, 1836."

"Perhaps all is for the best," said the Abbé de Grancey to himself.

When he had communicated this letter to Rosalie, who kissed with a pious fervor the passage that contained her pardon, he said to her, "Well, now that he is lost to you, will you not reconcile yourself with your mother by marrying the Count de Soulas?"

"Albert must order me to do it," she said.

"You see it is impossible to consult him; the general would not allow it."

"If I were to go and see him?"

"Nobody can see the Carthusians. And, besides, no woman, except the queen of France, can enter the Chartreuse," said the abbé. "So you have no excuse for not marrying young Monsieur de Soulas."

"I will not be the cause of unhappiness to my mother," replied Rosalie.

"Satan!" exclaimed the vicar-general.

Toward the end of this winter, the excellent Abbé de Grancey died. There was no longer, between Madame de Watteville and her daughter, this friend who interposed between these two characters of iron. The event foreseen by the vicar-general took place. In the month of April, 1837, Madame de Watteville married Monsieur de Soulas at Paris, to which she went by the advice of Rosalie, who behaved charmingly and kindly to her mother. Madame de Watteville thought it was affection in her daughter, who wished to see Paris solely for the purpose of indulging in a terrible vengeance; she thought

only of avenging Savarus by making a martyr of her rival.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who had nearly attained the age of twenty-one, had been declared of age. Her mother, in order to settle accounts with her, had relinquished her rights on the Rouxeys; and the daughter had given her mother a discharge as to the succession of the Baron de Watteville. Rosalie had encouraged her mother to marry the Count de Soulas, and to benefit him.

"Let us each have our liberty," she said to her.

Madame de Soulas, although uneasy about the intentions of her daughter, was nevertheless touched by the nobility of her proceedings. She made her a present of six thousand francs a year in the funds, to satisfy her conscience. As Madame the Countess de Soulas had an income of forty-eight thousand francs from landed property, and no power to alienate it so as to diminish the portion of Rosalie, Mademoiselle de Watteville was still a match of eighteen hundred thousand francs. The Rouxeys might produce, with the purchases of the baron and some improvements, twenty thousand francs a year, besides the advantages of the house, and the fines and reserved rights. Accordingly, Rosalie and her mother, who soon acquired the tone and fashions of Paris, were easily introduced into the best society. The golden key, the words "Eighteen hundred thousand francs," embroidered on the corsage of Mademoiselle de Watteville, were of much more service to the Countess de Soulas than her pretensions *à la De Rupt*, her misplaced pride, and even her rather fine-drawn family connections.

About the month of February, 1838, Rosalie, to whom a great many young men paid assiduous court, realized the project which had brought her to Paris. She wished to meet the Duchess de Rhetoré, to see this marvelous woman, and to plunge her into eternal remorse. Accordingly, Rosalie displayed a dazzling elegance and coquetry, in order to place herself on a footing of equality with the duchess. The first meeting took place at the ball given annually, ever since 1830, for the pensioners of the former civil list.

A young man, instigated by Rosalie, said to the duchess, pointing her out, "There is a very remarkable young girl, with a very strong mind. She drove into a cloister at the Great Chartreuse a man of great capacity, Albert de Savarus, whose existence was shattered by her. It is Mademoiselle de Watteville, the famous heiress of Besancon."

The duchess turned pale, and Rosalie rapidly exchanged with her one of those glances which, between woman and woman, are more mortal than the pistol-shots of a duel. Francesca Soderini, who suspected the innocence of Albert, immediately left the ball-room, hastily quitting her interlocutor, who was incapable of guessing the terrible wound he had just given the beautiful Duchess de Rhetoré.

"If you wish to know any more about Albert, come to the ball at the Opera on Tuesday next, with a marigold in your hand."

This anonymous letter, sent by Rosalie to the duchess, brought the unhappy Italian to the ball, when Mademoiselle de Watteville placed in her hands all Albert's letters—the one written by the vicar-general to Léopold Hannequin, as well as the answer of the notary, and even that in which she had confessed everything to Monsieur de Grancey.

"I will not be the only one to suffer; for we have been quite as cruel, one as the other," she said to her rival.

After having enjoyed the stupefaction painted on the lovely face of the duchess, Rosalie made her escape, appeared no more in society, and returned with her mother to Besancon.

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who lives alone on her estate of the Rouxeys, riding on horseback, hunting, refusing her two or three offers a year, coming four or five times every winter to Besancon, occupied in improving her estate, passed for an extremely eccentric person. She is one of the celebrities of the east.

Madame de Soulas has two children, a

boy and a girl. She has got younger; but young Monsieur de Soulas has got considerably older.

"My fortune costs me dear," said he to young Chavoncourt. "To know a devotee thoroughly, unfortunately, you must marry her."

Mademoiselle de Watteville behaves like a truly extraordinary girl. They say of her, "She has her crotchets." She goes every year to look at the walls of the Great Chartreuse. Perhaps she intends to imitate her grand-uncle, by scaling the walls of this convent to get at her husband, as Watteville got over the walls of his monastery to recovery his liberty.

In 1841 she left Besancon with the intention, it was said, of being married: but no one ever knew the true cause of this voyage, from which she returned in a state which forbade her ever to reappear in the world.

By one of those hazards to which the old Abbé de Grancey had alluded, she happened to be on the Loire, on board the steamer whose boiler blew up. Mademoiselle de Watteville was so severely injured that she lost her right arm and her left leg; her face bears frightful scars, which deprive her of her beauty; her health, subjected to such horrible trials, leaves her very few days without suffering. In short, at the present day she never quits the hermitage of the Rouxeys, where she leads a life entirely devoted to works of religion.

VI.

HOUSE OF THE TENNIS-PLAYING CAT.

On the Rue Saint Denis, near the corner of the Rue du Petit Lion, stood one of those precious houses that enable historians to reconstruct by analogy ancient Paris. The tottering walls of this rickety building were made motley with hieroglyphics. What other name could the lounger give to the *X's* and *V's* traced on its front by the transverse or diagonal pieces of wood showing through the paint in small parallel cracks? Evidently, whenever the lightest carriage passed by, each of these joists shook in its mortise. This venerable edifice was surmounted by a triangular roof, of which, before long, no model can be found in Paris. This roof, warped by the inclemency of the Parisian climate, projected three feet over the street, as much to guard the threshold of the door from the rain as to shelter the wall of a garret and its unsilled window. This upper story was constructed of boards nailed one upon another like slates.

On a rainy morning in March, a young man, carefully wrapped in his cloak, stood under the awning of a shop opposite this old house, which he examined with the enthusiasm of an archæologist. This remnant of sixteenth-century life offered the observer more than one problem to puzzle over. Each story presented some peculiarity: On the first, four tall, narrow windows, close together, had wooden panes in their lower part, in order to produce that dim light by the aid of which a skillful tradesman imparts to his stuffs the color desired by his customers. The young man seemed disdainful enough toward this essential portion of the house; his eyes had not yet rested upon it. The windows of the second story, whose raised blinds allowed a glimpse, through large panes of Bohemian glass, of some small red muslin curtains, interested him equally. His attention was directed, especially at the third story, to some humble casements, the rudely joined wood of which made it worthy a place in the Conservatory of Arts and Manufactures as a specimen of the early efforts of French carpentry. These casements had little panes of so green a

color that, but for his excellent sight, the young man could not have perceived the cloth curtains with blue squares that concealed the mysteries of this apartment from profane eyes.

The observer, wearied by his unavailing contemplation or by the silence in which the house was buried, as well as all that part of town, occasionally dropped his glance toward the lower floors. An involuntary smile then curled his lips, as he saw the shop and its many ludicrous features. A large piece of wood, horizontally supported upon four pillars that seemed bent under the weight of the decrepit house, had been set off by as many coats of different paints as the cheek of an old duchess. In the middle of this broad, delicately carved beam there was an antique picture representing a cat playing tennis.

This painting was the cause of the young man's merriment. And yet the cleverest of modern painters could not have invented a more comical caricature. The animal held a racket as large as himself in one of his fore-paws, and stood erect on his hind-paws ready to strike an enormous ball that a man in an embroidered coat was about to toss toward him. The drawing, colors, accessories—all had been so treated as to make one believe that the artist had desired to make fun of the tradesman and of the passers-by. Time had made this ingenious painting more grotesque by some uncertainties that were well fitted to disturb truth-loving strollers. Thus, the cat's spotted tail was cut up in such a manner that it might have been taken for a looker-on at the game—so big, long, and bushy were the tails of our ancestors' cats. At the right of the picture, on an azure background that imperfectly disguised the rottenness of the wood, the passers read: "Guillaume" and at the left: "Successor of M. Chevrel." The sun and the rain had corroded the greater part of the ormolu parsimoniously applied on the letters of this inscription, in which the *U's* replaced the *V's*, and reciprocally, according to the rules of our ancient orthography. In order to bring down the pride of those who believe the world is becoming more intelligent from day to day, and modern charlatanism surpasses everything, it may be here remarked, that these signs, whose etymology seems strange to more than one Parisian merchant, are the dead pictures of the living pictures, by the aid of which our enterprising ancestors succeeded in enticing customers into their shops. Thus the *Spinning Pig*, the *Green Ape*, etc., were animals in cages, whose cleverness astonished the people passing, and whose education proved the fifteenth century shop-keeper's patience. Curiosities of this kind enriched their lucky possessors more speedily than such signs as —*Providence, Good Faith, Grace of God*, and *Beheading of St. John the Baptist*, that may still be seen in the Rue Saint Denis.

The unknown man, however, did not stand there to admire this cat, which a moment's attention would have sufficed to engrave upon the memory. This young gentleman had his peculiarities as well. His mantle, folded in the style of ancient drapery, allowed a glimpse of an elegant pair of shoes, the more remarkable amid the Parisian mud, because he wore white-silk stockings, the spots on which evidenced his impatience. Doubtless he had just come from some wedding-party or ball, for at this early hour he carried white gloves in his hand, and the ringlets of his black hair, out of curl and hanging over his shoulders, showed it had been dressed *a la Caracalla*, a fashion due as much to David's school of painting as to that infatuation for Greek and Roman forms that marked the first years of the present century.

Despite the noise made by a few belated kitchen-gardeners galloping toward the great market, this busy street had then a calm whose magic is known only to those who have strolled through deserted Paris at such hours as its clatter, silenced for a time, is born again and may be heard in the distance like the gruff voice of the sea.

This singular young man must have been as interesting to the people of the *Tennis-Playing Cat* as the *Tennis-Play-*

ing Cat was to him. A cravat of dazzling whiteness made his troubled face look paler than it really was. The fire, alternately dull and sparkling, of his black eyes harmonized well with the odd contours of his visage, with his large and sinuous mouth, which contracted in smiling. His brow, frowning in violent vexation, had something unpleasant about it. Is not the brow the most characteristic feature of a man? Whenever that of the unknown expressed passion, the wrinkles forming in it caused a sort of terror by the vigor with which they were pronounced; but when he regained his calmness, so easily disturbed, there breathed in it a luminous charm which made attractive this physiognomy where joy, grief, love, anger, disdain, burst forth in so contagious a manner that the coldest of men must have been impressed.

This unknown gentleman was so vexed at the moment that the window of the attic was hastily opened that he did not notice appearing there three merry faces, plump, white, and rosy, but as commonplace as are the figures of Commerce sculptured on monuments. These three faces, framed by the window, reminded one of the heads of chubby angels scattered through the clouds that accompany the Eternal Father. The apprentices breathed in the exhalations of the street with an eagerness that demonstrated how hot and mephitic must be the air of their garret. After pointing out this strange sentinel, the shop-boy, who was apparently the jolliest, disappeared, and came back holding in his hand an instrument whose inflexible metal has of late been replaced by supple leather; then they all assumed a malicious expression in looking at the idler, and sprinkled him with a fine and whitish rain the perfume of which proved that these three chins had just been shaved. Standing on tip-toe and drawing back in their garret to enjoy their victim's wrath, the shop-boys stopped laughing as they saw the heedless disdain with which the young man shook his cloak, and the profound contempt depicted on his countenance when he lifted his eyes to the empty window. Just at that moment a white and delicate hand raised the lower part of one of the rude casements of the third story, by sliding it up and fastening it with an arrangement which often unexpectedly lets fall the heavy sash that it ought to hold fast. The man in the street was rewarded for his long waiting.

A young girl's face, fresh as one of those white chalices that flower upon the bosom of waters, showed itself, crowned with a quilling of rumpled muslin that gave her head a look of admirable innocence. Although covered with a brown stuff, her neck and shoulders could be perceived, thanks to the slight interstices produced by her tossing about in sleep. No expression of constraint marred the artlessness of that face, or the serenity of those eyes—similar to those immortalized in advance by the sublime compositions of Raphael. Here was the same grace and the same tranquillity that have now become proverbial in his Madonnas. There existed a charming contrast between the youth of this figure's cheeks, on which sleep had put in relief, as it were, a superabundance of life, and the old age of that massive window with its rude shapes and blackened sill. Like those flowers of the day which in the morning have not yet unfolded their tunic rolled up by the cold of night, the hardly-awake young woman let her blue eyes roam over the neighboring roofs and looked up at the sky; then, by the force of habit, she lowered them to the somber regions of the street, where they encountered at once the eyes of her adorer. Coquetry doubtless made her suffer at being seen in undress; she stepped back hastily, the worn window-fastening slipped, the sash dropped with a rapidity which, in our time, has given a bad name to this simple invention of our ancestors, and the vision disappeared.

To the young man the most brilliant of the morning's stars seemed to have been suddenly obscured by a cloud.

During these slight occurrences, the heavy inside shutters guarding the light shop-windows of the *Tennis-Playing Cat* were taken down as if by magic. The old

door with its knocker was thrown back upon the inner wall of the house by a servant, probably contemporary with the sign, who with a trembling hand attached to it the square piece of cloth on which was embroidered in yellow silk the name of "Guillaume, Successor of M. Chevrel."

It would have been difficult for a stranger to guess the kind of business carried on by M. Guillaume. Through the big iron bars protecting his shop on the outside, one could barely discern packages wrapped in brown cloth and as numerous as are the herrings crossing the ocean. Notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of this Gothic façade, M. Guillaume was, of all the dry-goods dealers of Paris, the one whose store was always the best stocked, whose business was the most extensive, and whose commercial repute labored under not the least suspicion. If any of his fellow-tradesmen took government contracts without having the requisite quantity of cloth, he was always ready to furnish them with it, however considerable might be the number of pieces called for. The wily merchant knew a thousand ways of appropriating the biggest profit without being obliged, like them, to run after influential persons, to have recourse to mean tricks or rich bribes. If his fellow-tradesmen could only pay him in excellent notes with rather a long time to run, he referred them to his notary as an accommodating person, and managed to extract a second profit from them by this expedient, which made the merchants of the Rue Saint Denis say as a proverb: "God deliver you from M. Guillaume's notary!" to indicate an extortionate discount.

The old merchant happened to be standing on the threshold of his shop, as by a miracle, at the very moment the domestic withdrew. Monsieur Guillaume looked at the Rue Saint Denis, the neighboring shops, and the weather, like a man landing at Havre and seeing France once more after a long voyage. Thoroughly convinced that nothing had changed during his sleep, he then noticed the man doing sentry duty, who, on his side, contemplated the patriarch of the dry-goods business as Humboldt must have examined the first electrical eel he saw in America. Monsieur Guillaume wore large black-velvet breeches, dyed stockings, and square shoes with silver buckles. His square-cut coat, with square skirts and a square collar, enveloped his slightly protuberant body with a greenish cloth garnished with big buttons of a metal, naturally white, but reddened by use. His gray hairs were so exactly flattened down and combed out over his yellow skull that they made it look like a plowed field. His little green eyes, as piercing as a gimlet, blazed under two arches marked with a slight red for want of eyebrows. Anxiety had traced on his forehead horizontal wrinkles as numerous as the folds of his coat. This sallow face indicated patience, commercial wisdom, and the species of crafty cupidity that is called for in business. At this period one saw less rarely than in our day those old families keeping up, like precious traditions, the manners and distinctive costumes of their professions, and going on amid the new civilization like those geological remains found by Cuvier in the quarries.

The head of the Guillaume family was one of these notable guardians of ancient customs; he might be surprised regretting the "provost of the tradesmen," and never did he speak of a judgment of the tribunal of commerce without calling it the *sentence of the consuls*. The first one to rise in his house, no doubt by virtue of these customs, he calmly awaited the coming of his three shop-boys, in order to scold them if they were late. These youthful disciples of Mercury knew nothing more fearful than the silent sharpness with which their master scrutinized their faces and movements, on Monday morning, to discover proofs or traces of their escapades. But at this moment the old dry-goods dealer paid no attention to his apprentices; he was busily seeking the motive of the solicitude with which that young man in silk stockings and mantle cast eyes alternately upon his sign and upon the depths of his shop. The light

becoming brighter, allowed a view there of the office, railed off, surrounded by old green-silk curtains, where were kept the huge books—mute oracles of the business.

The too inquisitive stranger seemed to hanker after this little place. So great a fondness for his house appeared suspicious to a merchant who had suffered under the system of the *Maximum*. Monsieur Guillaume therefore supposed, naturally enough, that this sinister personage had designs upon the cash of the *Tennis-Playing Cat.*

After discreetly enjoying the mute duel which was taking place between his master and the unknown, the senior shop-boy ventured to step out upon the sidewalk, where M. Guillaume stood watching the young man gazing stealthily up at the casements of the third story; he took two steps into the street, raised his eyes, and thought he detected Mademoiselle Augustine Guillaume hurriedly drawing back out of sight. Displeased by the sharpness of his head clerk, the merchant gave him a glance askance; but suddenly the mutual fears excited in the tradesman's heart and that of his devoted clerk by this stranger's presence were quieted.

The unknown hailed a carriage on its way to a neighboring square, and quickly jumped into it, affecting the utmost indifference. This departure poured balm upon the spirits of the other clerks, somewhat disturbed at encountering once more the victim of their sport.

"Well, young men, what are you standing there for with your arms crossed?" said Monsieur Guillaume to his three neophites. "In old times, when I was with Monsieur Chevrel, by this hour I had already examined more than two whole pieces of cloth."

"It must have been light earlier then?" said the second clerk, who had charge of this part of the business.

The old merchant could not help smiling. Although two of these three young men, intrusted to his care by their fathers, wealthy manufacturers of Louviers and Sedan, had only to ask for a hundred thousand francs to have them on the day they should be of age to set up for themselves, Guillaume thought it his duty to hold them under the ferule of an antique despotism unknown in our days, to those brilliant modern shops, where the clerks aspire to be rich at thirty; he made them work like negroes. Alone these three clerks had to accomplish as much as would have completely wornout ten of the employés whose sybaritism nowadays swells the columns of the expense account. No noise disturbed the peace of this solemn house, where the hinges seemed to be always oiled, and where the smallest bit of furniture had that scrupulous cleanliness indicative of severe order and economy. Often, the jolliest of the clerks had amused himself with writing on the Gruyère cheese which was given them for breakfast, and which they were glad to let well alone, the date of its primitive reception.

This touch of malice and a few similar ones sometimes made the younger of Guillaume's two daughters smile—the pretty maid who had just appeared to the enchanted stranger.

Though each of the apprentices, even the oldest one, paid a good price for his board, he would never have been bold enough to remain at his master's table a moment after dessert had been served. When Madame Guillaume spoke of mixing the salad, these poor young men trembled in thinking with what parsimony her prudent hand had a knack of pouring in the oil. They must never take it into their heads to pass a night out of the house without giving, a long time in advance, a plausible excuse for such an irregularity. Every Sunday, and in regular rotation, two clerks accompanied the Guillaume family to mass at Saint-Leu and to vespers. Mesdemoiselles Virginie and Augustine, modestly robed in calico, each took a clerk's arm and walked on ahead, under the scrutinizing eyes of their mother, who brought up the rear of this little domestic procession with her husband, trained by her to carry two large prayer-books bound in black morocco.

The second clerk had no salary.

As for the one whom twelve years of

perseverance and discretion had initiated into the secrets of the house, he received eight hundred francs as a compensation for his labors. At certain family festivals he was gratified with a few presents, to which Madame Guillaume's dry and wrinkled hand alone gave value; knit purses which she took care to stuff with cotton in order to show off their open-work designs, strongly made suspenders, or very heavy pairs of silk stockings. Sometimes, but rarely, this prime-minister was allowed to share in the pleasures of the family, either when it made an excursion into the country, or when, after months of waiting, it decided to use its right, in hiring a box at the theater, to ask after some play that Paris no longer thought of. As for the other three clerks, the barrier of respect that in old times separated a master dry-goods dealer from his apprentices was so strongly fixed between them and the old merchant that it would have been easier for them to steal a piece of cloth than to disturb this august etiquette.

Such reserve may seem ridiculous nowadays: but these old houses were schools of manners and of probity. The masters adopted their apprentices. A young man's linen was looked after, mended, and sometimes renewed by the mistress of the house. If a clerk became ill, truly maternal care was bestowed upon him. In case of danger, the master lavished his money to call in the most celebrated doctors; since he felt responsible for more than merely the morals and knowledge of these young men to their parents. If one of them, honorable in character, chanced to fall in love, these old merchants knew how to appreciate the intelligence which they had developed; and they did not hesitate to intrust the happiness of their daughter to the man whom they had long intrusted with their fortune.

Guillaume was one of these old-fashioned individuals, and if he had their oddities, he had also all their good qualities: so Joseph Lebas, his head clerk, an orphan without fortune, was in his mind the future husband of Virginie, his older daughter.

But Joseph did not share the symmetrical thoughts of his master, who would not for the world have married off his second daughter before his first. The unfortunate clerk felt his heart completely captivated by Mademoiselle Augustine, the younger daughter. In order to justify this passion, which had grown up in secret, it is necessary to penetrate more deeply into the precincts of the absolute government that held sway over the old draper's house.

Guillaume had two daughters. The elder, Mademoiselle Virginie, was quite the picture of her mother. Madame Guillaume, the daughter of Monsieur Chevrel, sat so bolt upright on the bench behind her counter that more than once she had heard people wager in jest that she was impaled. Her lean and long visage gave evidence of excessive devoutness. Without charms or amiable manners, Madame Guillaume habitually ornamented her almost sexagenary head with a cap of an invariable shape, and garnished with lappets like a widow's cap. All the neighborhood called her the guardian sister of the convent. Her words were few, and her gestures had something of the jerkiness of the Morse telegraphic alphabet. Her eye, as sharp as a cat's, seemed to bear a grudge against everybody because its owner was ugly.

Mademoiselle Virginie, brought up like her young sister under their mother's despotic laws, had attained the age of twenty-eight years. Youth lessened the uncomely look which the likeness to her mother sometimes gave her face; but the maternal rigor had endowed her with two great qualities that might counterbalance everything—she was sweet and patient.

Mademoiselle Augustine, hardly eighteen years old, resembled neither her father nor mother. She was one of those girls who, by the absence of all physical bond of union with their parents, inspire a belief in the old woman's saying: "God bestows children." Augustine was small, or, to picture her more exactly, delicate and pretty. Graceful and abounding in frankness, a man of the world could only have reproached

this charming creature with awkward gestures or certain commonplace attitudes, and occasionally with embarrassment. Her silent and unmoved face gave expression to the passing melancholy that possesses all young women too weak to venture resistance to a mother's will. Always modestly dressed, the two sisters could not satisfy their innate woman's coquetry except by a luxury of neatness, which was wonderfully becoming to them and put them in harmony with those shining counters, with those shelves where the old domestic permitted not a speck of dust, and with the antique simplicity of everything to be seen around them. Obliged by their way of life to seek the elements of happiness in persevering work, Augustine and Virginie had hitherto given only satisfaction to their mother, who privately congratulated herself upon her two daughters' perfection of character. It is easy to imagine the results of the education they had received. Brought up for business, accustomed to hear only wretched, mercantile arguments and calculations; having studied only grammar, book-keeping, a little Jewish and French history, and reading solely such authors as were permitted by their mother, their ideas had not grown to be very extensive. They could keep house perfectly; they knew the prices of things; they understood the difficulties in the way of accumulating money; they were economical, and had a great respect for the qualities of the merchant. In spite of their father's wealth, they were as skillful in mending as in embroidering. Often their mother spoke about teaching them how to cook, so that they might be able to order a dinner and scold a cook with a proper understanding of the subject.

Ignorant of the world's pleasures and beholding how the exemplary life of their parents glided away, they rarely cast a glance beyond the confines of this ancestral house which was the whole universe to their mother. The social gatherings occasioned by family solemnities formed all the future of their earthly joys.

When the large drawing-room in the second story was to receive Madame Roguin, who was once a Mademoiselle Chevrel, fifteen years younger than her cousin, and who wore diamonds; the young Rabourdin, second chief clerk in the Department of Finance; M. César Birotteau, the wealthy perfumer, and his wife, known as Madame César; M. Camusot, the richest dealer in silks of the Rue des Bourdonnais, and his father-in-law, Monsieur Cardot; two or three old bankers, and a few irreproachable ladies, the preparations necessitated by the way the plate, the Dresden china, the wax candles, and the glass-ware were packed away made a diversion in the monotonous life of these three women, who went and came and bustled about as actively as do nuns for the reception of their bishop. Then, when night found all three worn out with wiping, rubbing, unpacking, and putting in place the ornaments of the entertainment, the two girls helped their mother to go to bed, and Madame Guillaume said to them:

"We have done nothing to-day, my children!"

Whenever, in these solemn parties, the guardian sister of the convent allowed dancing, restricting the games of Boston, whist, and backgammon to her own chamber, this concession was accounted a most unexpected felicity, and caused a happiness equal to that of going to the two or three great balls where Guillaume took his daughters in carnival time. Finally, once in the year, the honest dry-goods merchant gave an entertainment, on which he spared no expense. However rich and elegant might be the people invited, they were very careful not to be absent; for the most considerable houses in business had recourse to the immense credit, the wealth, or the great experience of Monsieur Guillaume. But the two daughters of this worthy tradesman did not profit as much as might have been supposed from the lessons which the world offers to young people. They wore at these parties—recorded, moreover, on the register of bills payable of the house—such shabby gowns that they were forced to blush. Their manner of dancing had nothing remarkable about it,

and the maternal supervision did not allow them to carry on a conversation with their partners otherwise than by "yes" and "no." Then the law of the old sign of the *Tennis-Playing Cat* commanded them to be in bed at eleven o'clock, the very hour when balls and entertainments begin to grow animated. Thus their pleasures, in appearance conformable enough to their father's fortune, often became insipid from circumstances inherent in the habits and principles of the family.

As for their ordinary life, a single remark will fully characterize it. Madame Guillaume required that her two daughters should be dressed early in the morning, that they should go downstairs every day at the same hour, and she subjected all their doings to a conventual regularity. However, Augustine had received from fate a soul lofty enough to feel the emptiness of such an existence. At times her blue eyes were raised as if to question the depths of that dark staircase and of those damp stores. After fathoming this cloisteral silence, she seemed to listen from afar to confused revelations of that passionate life which places a higher value upon sentiments than upon things. At these moments a color came into her face, her listless hands let the white muslin fall on the polished oak of the counter, and soon her mother would say to her, in a voice that remained always sharp, even in its sweetest accents:

"Augustine! why, what are you thinking of, my dear?"

Perhaps "Hippolyte, Count of Douglas," and the "Count of Comminges," two novels found by Augustine in the cupboard of a cook recently discharged by Madame Guillaume, contributed to the development of this young lady's ideas, for she had secretly devoured them during the long nights of the preceding winter. Augustine's expressions of vague desire, her sweet voice, her jasmine complexion, and her blue eyes had therefore kindled in poor Lebas's soul a love as violent as it was respectful. By a caprice easy to understand, Augustine felt not the slightest liking for the orphan; it might have been because she did not know that he was in love with her. By way of retaliation, the head-clerk's long legs, auburn hair, big hands, and robust build had awakened a secret admiration in Mademoiselle Virginie, who, despite her fifty thousand crowns of dowry, was not yet asked in marriage by anybody. Nothing could be more natural than these two inverted passions born amid the silence of that dark shop as violets flower in the depths of the woods. The mute and constant contemplation that united these young peoples' eyes by their urgent need of distraction in the midst of plodding labor and a religious peace, must sooner or later have excited feelings of love. The habit of seeing a face makes one discover in it insensibly the qualities of the soul, and ends by effacing its defects.

"At the rate this man is going on, it will not be long before our girls have to get down on their knees to beg for a suitor," said Monsieur Guillaume to himself on reading the first decree by which Napoleon anticipated on the classes of conscripts.

From that day, in despair at seeing his elder daughter fade away, the old merchant called to mind his having married Mademoiselle Chevrel in very nearly such a situation as Joseph Lebas and Virginie were in. What a good thing it would be to marry his daughter and to pay off a sacred debt by showing unto an orphan the kindness which he had himself received in old times from his predecessor under the same circumstances! Thirty-three years old, Joseph Lebas thought of the obstacles that a difference of fifteen years put between Augustine and himself. Too clear-sighted, moreover, not to guess at Monsieur Guillaume's plans, he was well enough acquainted with his inexorable principles to know that never would the younger daughter be married before the elder one. The poor clerk, whose heart was as excellent as his legs were long and his chest was broad, suffered therefore in silence.

Such was the state of affairs in this little republic which, in the heart of the

M. GUILLAUME
The typical merchant.

Rue Saint Denis, resembled somewhat a branch of the Trappist Order.

But to give an exact account of external events as well as of emotions, it is necessary to go back to a few months before the scene with which this story begins. At the hour of twilight, a young man, passing before the dark shop of the *Tennis-Playing Cat,* stopped a moment to contemplate a picture which would have fascinated all the painters of the world. The store, not being yet lighted, formed a black foreground, at the back of which could be seen the merchant's dining-room. An astral lamp shed there that yellow light which imparts such a charm to the paintings of the Dutch school. The white linen, the silver and glass-ware, formed brilliant accessories that were further embellished by the sharp contrasts between light and shadow. The face of the father of the family and that of his wife, the visages of the clerks and Augustine's regular features, a stout, chubby-cheeked girl standing two steps away from her, composed such a curious group; these heads were so original, and each personage had so open an expression; the peace, the quiet, and the modest life of this family were so plainly evident that an artist accustomed to delineating nature could not but feel desperately anxious to reproduce this fortuitous scene. The passer was a young painter who had won the great prize for painting, seven years before. He was just home from Rome. His soul, nurtured on poetry, his eyes, sated with Raphael and Michael Angelo, thirsted for simple nature after a long residence in the pompous country where art spreads its magnificence on all sides. False or just, this was his personal feeling. Long given up to the ardor of Italian passions, his heart demanded one of those modest and serene maids whom, unfortunately, he had only been able to find in paintings at Rome. From the enthusiasm of soul inspired by the artless picture which he beheld, he passed naturally to a profound admiration for its principal figure. Augustine seemed pensive and did not eat. The lamp was so arranged that the light fell full upon her face; her form appeared to move in a circle of fire which set off more vividly the contours of her head and illuminated it in an almost supernatural manner. The artist involuntarily compared her to an exiled angel recalling heaven to her mind. An almost unknown sensation, a limpid and bubbling love, overflowed his heart.

After standing a moment as if crushed by the weight of his thoughts, he tore himself away from his happiness, went home, could not eat, and could not sleep.

On the next day he entered his studio not to leave it until he had deposited on canvas the witchery of this scene which had quite taken possession of him. His happiness was incomplete as long as he did not own a portrait of his idol. He passed several times before the house of the *Tennis-Playing Cat;* he ventured even to enter once or twice on a pretended errand of purchase, in order to have a nearer view of the fascinating creature sheltered under Madame Guillaume's wing. During eight whole months, absorbed by his love and his brushes, he remained invisible to his most intimate friends, forgetting society, books, the theater, music, and his dearest habits.

One morning Girodet, disregarding the servants' instructions, which artists understand and manage to elude, forced his way in and startled him with this question: "What are you going to put in the Salon?"

The artist seized his friend's hand, led him into his studio, uncovered a small easel-picture and a portrait. After a slow and eager contemplation of the two masterpieces, Girodet fell on his comrade's neck and embraced him without finding a word to say. His emotions could only be expressed as he felt them, from soul to soul.

"Are you in love?" asked Girodet.

Both of them knew that the finest portraits of Titian, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci are due to those inspired feelings which, under different conditions, give rise indeed to all masterpieces. The only reply the young artist made was to bow his head.

"You are a happy man to be able to

fall in love here, just after coming home from Italy! I don't advise you to exhibit such works in the Salon," added the great painter. "You see these two pictures would not be felt there. These true colors, this prodigious amount of labor, cannot yet be appreciated; the public is no longer accustomed to such depth. The pictures we paint, my good friend, are mere daubs, mere screens. Well, let us rather make verses and translate the classics! There is more glory to be looked for from that than from our unlucky canvases."

Despite this charitable advice, the two pictures were exhibited. The interior created a revolution in painting. It gave birth to those *genre* pictures, the prodigious number of which in all our exhibitions might lead one to believe that they are turned out by some purely mechanical processes. As for the portrait, there are few artists who do not retain some recollection of that living canvas which became as much of a favorite with the public, sometimes judging justly in a body, as with Girodet himself. The two pictures were surrounded by an immense crowd. Women said it was as much as your life was worth to get near them. Speculators and great noblemen offered to cover the two paintings with double Napoleons; the artist obstinately refused to sell them, and refused to make any copies of them. He was offered an enormous amount for the permission to engrave them; the dealers were no more successful than the amateurs had been.

Although this affair created a sensation, it was not of a nature to make its way into the little desert of the Rue Saint Denis; nevertheless, when calling on Madame Guillaume, the notary's wife spoke of the exhibition before Augustine, whom she was very fond of, and explained to her all about it. Madame Roguin's tattle naturally inspired in Augustine a desire to see the pictures and the hardihood to secretly ask her cousin to accompany her to the Louvre.* The cousin succeeded in the negotiations which she opened with Madame Guillaume for obtaining permission to tear her young cousin away from her dull labors during about two hours. The girl therefore penetrated through the crowd to the portrait that had won the prize. A shiver made her tremble like a birch-leaf when she recognized herself. She felt afraid, and looked around her to get back to Madame Roguin, from whom she had been separated by a press of people.

Just at this moment her frightened eyes fell upon the blazing face of the young painter. She remembered all at once the looks of a passer-by whom she had often noticed with some curiosity, supposing that it was a new neighbor.

"You see what love has inspired me to do!" said the artist in the timid creature's ear; and she was quite terrified by his words.

She mustered up a supernatural courage to cleave her way through the throng and join her cousin, who was still busily struggling with the mass of humanity that prevented her reaching the picture.

"You will be crushed to death," exclaimed Augustine; "let us go!"

But there are certain times at the Salon when two women are not always free to direct their steps in the galleries: Mademoiselle Guillaume and her cousin were pushed to within a few feet of the second picture in consequence of the erratic course that the crowd compelled them to take. Chance willed that they should have together the opportunity to approach the canvas which fashion, agreeing this time with talent, made famous.

The exclamation of surprise uttered by the notary's wife was lost in the commotion and buzzing of the multitude. Augustine shed tears involuntarily at the sight of this wonderful scene, and, inspired by an almost inexplicable feeling, she laid her finger upon her lips on perceiving close at hand the young artist's rapturous face. The unknown responded by a nod of his head, and pointed out Madame Roguin as the disturber of their happiness, in order to show Augustine that she was understood. This panto-

* Where the annual exhibitions were then held, the Palais d'Industre being of very recent construction.—EDITOR.

mime was like a firebrand to the poor girl, who thought herself criminally wrong when she imagined that a sort of agreement had just been made between herself and the artist. The stifling heat, the sight of so many brilliant toilets, and Augustine's amazement at the bright colors, the multitude of living and painted faces, the profusion of gilt frames, made her experience a sort of intoxication that redoubled her fears. She would, perhaps, have fainted away if, in spite of the chaos of her sensations, there had not sprung up at the bottom of her heart an unknown joy which made her whole being alive. Nevertheless, she supposed herself under the sway of that demon whose terrible snares had been predicted to her by the thundering words of preachers. That moment was to her a moment of mental distraction. She saw this young man, radiant with happiness and love, follow her to her cousin's carriage.

Preyed upon by an entirely new excitement, by an intoxication that gave her over to nature, Augustine listened to the eloquent voice of her heart, and glanced several times at the young painter, betraying the trouble that possessed her. Never had the glow of her cheeks formed a sharper contrast to the whiteness of her skin. The artist then perceived her beauty in its full flower, her modesty in all its glory. Augustine felt a species of joy, mingled with terror, as she thought that her presence caused the felicity of the man whose name was on all lips, and whose talent gave immortality to fleeting images.

She was loved! It was impossible for her to doubt it.

When she could no longer see the artist, those simple words still sounded within her heart: "You see what love has inspired me to do!" and its palpitations, growing stronger, seemed pain to her, while her more ardent blood awakened powers unknown in her being. She pretended to have a severe headache in order to escape answering her cousin's questions about the pictures; but on reaching home, Madame Roguin could not refrain from speaking to Madame Guillaume of the celebrity obtained by the *Tennis-Playing Cat,* and Augustine trembled all over at hearing her mother say that she would go to the Salon to see her house there. The young woman again insisted that she was indisposed, and obtained permission to leave the room.

"That is what you get running after all these sights," exclaimed Monsieur Guillaume; "headaches! Is it then so very amusing to see in a painting what you can look at any day in our street? Don't talk to me about artists; they are like your authors, they starve to death! What in creation do they want to take my house for and slander it in their pictures?"

"That may make us sell a few more yards of cloth," said Joseph Lebas.

This remark did not prevent the arts and thought from being once more condemned in the tribunal of commerce.

As may be well imagined, these discourses did not give much hope to Augustine, who was absorbed during the night by her first meditation on love. The events of the day were like a dream, which it pleased her to reproduce in thought. She was initiated into the fears, hopes, remorse; into all the undulations of sentiment that ever beguile so simple and timid a heart as was hers.

What a void she recognized in this dark house, and what a treasure she found in her own soul! To be the wife of a man of talent, and to share in his glory! What ravages such an idea must have made in the heart of a child brought up in the bosom of this family! What hope must it not have awakened in a young person who, hitherto bred on vulgar principles, had yet longed for a life of elegance! A ray of sunlight had fallen into this prison. Augustine was all at once in love. So many different feelings were awakened in her at the same time that she succumbed without stopping to calculate. At the age of eighteen, does not love interpose its prism between the world and the eyes of a young woman? Incapable of divining the rude shocks resulting from the alliance of a loving woman with a man of imagination, she thought

herself called upon to make this man's happiness, without taking note of any incompatibility between herself and him. To her the present was the whole future.

When her father and mother came home next day from the Salon, their glum faces indicated disappointment. First, the two pictures had been withdrawn by the painter; then, Madame Guillaume had lost her cashmere shawl. To learn that the pictures had disappeared immediately after her visit to the Salon, was for Augustine the revelation of a delicacy of feeling which women know how to appreciate, even instinctively.

That morning when, on his way home from a ball, Théodore de Sommervieux—such was the name that fame had wafted into Augustine's heart—was sprinkled by the clerks of the *Tennis-Playing Cat*, while he waited for the appearance of his artless beloved, who certainly did not know he was there, the two lovers saw one another for the fourth time only since the scene in the Salon. The obstacles opposed by the regulations of the Guillaume household to the artist's fiery character imparted an easily imagined violence to his passion for Augustine. How could one come near a young lady seated at a counter between two such women as Mademoiselle Virginie and Madame Guillaume? How was a correspondence to be carried on with her when her mother never left her?

Skillful, as all lovers are, in contriving misfortunes for himself, Théodore imagined a rival in one of the clerks, and supposed the others to act in the interests of his rival. If he should escape so many Arguses, he saw himself coming to grief under the sharp eyes of the old merchant or of Madame Guillaume. Everywhere obstacles, everywhere despair! The very violence of his passion prevented the young painter from hitting upon those ingenious expedients which, in prisoners as in lovers, seem to be the last effort of reason excited by a savage longing for liberty or by the fire of love.

Théodore, therefore, roamed about that part of town with the restlessness of a madman—as if motion could suggest artifices to him. After thoroughly racking his brains, he managed to think of bribing the chubby-cheeked servant-girl. So a few letters were exchanged, at long intervals, during the fortnight following the unlucky morning when M. Guillaume and Théodore had had such a good view of one another. By this time the two young people had agreed to see each other at a certain hour of the day, and on Sunday, at Saint Leu, during mass and vespers. Augustine had sent her dear Théodore a list of the relatives and friends of the family, and the young painter endeavored to get access to them, in order, if it were possible, to interest in his love affair one of those souls so wrapped up in money and business, that a true passion must have seemed to them a most monstrous and unheard-of sort of speculation.

Nothing, however, was changed in the habits of the *Tennis-Playing Cat*. If Augustine was absent-minded, if, contrary to all obedience to the laws of the domestic charter, she went upstairs to her room to make signals with a pot of flowers; if she sighed, if she grew pensive, nobody, not even her mother, noticed it. This circumstance will cause some surprise to those who have understood the spirit of this house, where a thought tinged with poetry must have produced such a contrast to the persons and things; where no one was allowed a gesture or a glance without its being seen and analyzed.

Nothing, however, could have been more natural. The quiet vessel sailing the stormy ocean of the Parisian market, under the flag of the *Tennis-Playing Cat*, was just then the prey of one of those tempests which might be called equinoctial in consequence of their periodical recurrence. During a fortnight, the five men of the crew, Madame Guillaume, and Mademoiselle Virginie applied themselves to that arduous undertaking known as taking account of stock. All the bales of merchandise were moved about, and the number of yards in each piece was measured to ascertain precisely the value of what was left. The tag appended to the package was carefully examined to see

when the goods had been bought. A new price was fixed on them.

Always bustling around, his yardstick in his hand, his pen over his ear, M. Guillaume was like a captain commanding the working of his ship.* His shrill voice, passing through a speaking-tube to question the deep hatchways of the lower warehouse, shouted out those barbarous commercial expressions which can only be reproduced by enigmas: "How much of H-N-Z?—Sold out.—What is left of Q-X?—Two yards.—What price?—Five-five-three.—Put all of J-J, all of M-P, and the rest of V-D-O at three A." A thousand other phrases quite as intelligible were roared around the counters like verses of modern poetry which romanticists quote to keep up their enthusiasm for one of their poets. In the evening, Guillaume, closeted with his clerk and his wife, balanced up the accounts, carried forward the balances, dunned the debtors in arrears, and made out bills. All three were busy with that immense labor, the result of which filled but a square piece of foolscap paper, and proved to the house of Guillaume that there was so much in money, so much in merchandise, so much in drafts and notes; that it did not owe a sou; that there were debts due it of one hundred or two hundred thousand francs; that the capital had been increased; that the farms, houses, and rents were to be rounded out, repaired, or doubled.

From all this resulted the necessity of beginning again with more ardor than ever to accumulate more money, without its ever occurring to these plodding ants to ask themselves: "What is the use?"

Thanks to this annual turmoil, the fortunate Augustine escaped investigation from her Arguses.

At last, one Saturday evening, the taking account of stock was finished. The figures of the total assets showed ciphers enough for Guillaume on this occasion to relax the strict rule which, the whole year through, prevailed at dessert. The shrewd dry-goods dealer rubbed his hands and allowed his clerks to remain at the table. Each man of the crew had scarcely come to the end of his small glass of home-made liquor when the rumbling of a carriage was heard. The family was going to see "Cinderella" at the Variétés Theatre, while the two youngest clerks received each six-francs and permission to go where he pleased, provided he should be in the house by midnight.

In spite of this dissipation, on Sunday morning the old merchant shaved himself at six o'clock, put on his chestnut coat, the resplendent color of which always caused him the same satisfaction, and attached the gold buckles to his ample silk small-clothes; then, toward seven o'clock, when all was still asleep within the house, he made his way to the little room opening out of his store, on the first story. It was lighted by a window, with thick iron bars that gave upon a small square courtyard so shut in by black walls that it was very like a well. The old man of business himself threw open these sheet-iron shutters that he knew so well, and raised the half of the window by sliding it up. The icy air of the yard came in and cooled the hot atmosphere of the room, which exhaled the odor peculiar to offices. The tradesman stood there, his hand resting upon the soiled arm of a cane-seat and leather-covered chair, quite faded from its primitive color, and he seemed to hesitate about sitting down. He looked with some emotion at the double desk, where his wife's place was arranged opposite his own by means of a small arcade made in the wall. He gazed at the numbered boxes, the string, the tools, the stamps for marking goods, the cash-box—objects of immemorial origin—and imagined he saw himself once more before the called-back shade of Monsieur Chevrel. He brought out the same stool on which in days of yore he had sat in his dead master's presence. This black-leather stool, from which the hair had long been slipping out at the corners without getting lost, his trembling hand set at the very place where his predecessor had put it; then, with an agitation difficult to describe, he pulled the bell-

* See Meissonier's portrait of M. Guillaume.—EDITOR.

rope that led to the head of Joseph Lebas's bed. When this decisive blow had been struck, the old man, finding these memories no doubt too oppressive, took up three or four bills of exchange that had been presented him—and he looked at them without seeing them—when Joseph Lebas suddenly appeared.

"Sit down there," said Guillaume to him, pointing toward the stool. As the old dry-goods dealer had never made his clerk take a seat before him, Joseph Lebas started.

"What do you think of these drafts?" asked Guillaume.

"They will not be paid."

"How so?"

"Why, I heard day before yesterday that Étienne & Co. were paying out gold."

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed the tradesman; "they must be very sick to show their bile. Let us talk of something else. Joseph, our inventory is finished."

"Yes, sir; and the dividend is one of the finest you have had."

"Don't use those new words. You must say 'proceeds,' Joseph. Do you know, my boy, that we are indebted to you a bit for these results? And I don't want that you should be working on a salary any longer. Madame Guillaume has suggested to me the idea of offering you an interest in the business. Now, Joseph, 'Guillaume & Lebas'—wouldn't that be a fine name for the firm? We might add, also, 'and Company,' to round out the signature."

The tears came into Joseph Lebas's eyes, and he strove to conceal them.

"Ah, Monsieur Guillaume! how have I deserved such kindness? I only do my duty. It was so much for you to take any interest in a poor orph—."

He brushed the cuff of his left sleeve with his right sleeve, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled as he thought that this modest young man no doubt needed, like himself in old times, to be encouraged to make the explanation complete.

"However," resumed Virginie's father, "you don't deserve this favor very much, Joseph. You don't put as much confidence in me as I do in you." (The clerk suddenly raised his head.) "You have the secret of the cash-box. For two years I have told you about almost all my affairs. I have let you travel to the factories; and so far as you are concerned I have nothing to reproach myself with. But you— You have a liking for some one, and you haven't breathed a single word to me about it." (Joseph Lebas blushed.) "Ah! ah!" exclaimed Guillaume, "you thought you could hoodwink an old fox like me, did you? Yet you saw me guess the Lecoq failure!"

"What, monsieur," rejoined Joseph Lebas, looking at his master as attentively as his master looked at him—"what, do you know whom I love?"

"I know all about it, you scapegrace," said the respectable and sly tradesman, pinching the tip of his ear; "and I forgive you. I did just the same thing myself."

"And you will let me have her?"

"Yes, with fifty thousand crowns, and I will leave you as much more; and we will start on a new account, with a new name for the firm. We will make things more lively, my boy!" cried the old shopkeeper, standing up and throwing his arms about. "See here, my son-in-law, there is nothing like business. The people who ask what pleasure there is in it are fools. To have a keen scent for business; to know how to stand at the head of the market; to wait anxiously, as in gambling, to see whether Étienne & Co. are going to fail; to behold a whole regiment of the Imperial Guard march by dressed in your cloth; to give your neighbor a whack, fairly and squarely, of course; to manufacture more cheaply than others can; to follow up some business project that begins small, grows, staggers, and succeeds; to be acquainted, like the chief of police, with all the resources of business houses, so as not to go off on the wrong track; to stand firm amid wrecks; to have friends by correspondence in all the manufacturing cities—is not all that a perpetual game, Joseph? Why, that is life itself! I shall die in the traces, as

old Chevrel did, and I shall be all the better for it."

In the heat of his greatest improvisation, Father Guillaume scarcely glanced at his clerk, who was weeping hot tears.

"Well, Joseph, my poor boy, what is the matter with you?"

"Ah! I love her so much—so much, Monsieur Guillaume, that my heart fails me, I think."

"Well, my boy," said the affected tradesman, "you are more fortunate than you think, indeed, for she is in love with you. I am sure of it." And he winked with both his little green eyes as he looked at his clerk.

"Mademoiselle Augustine! Mademoiselle Augustine!" cried Joseph Lebas in his enthusiasm. He was about to rush out of the room, when he felt himself stopped by an iron grasp, and his astounded master brought him back vigorously.

"What has Augustine to do in this matter?" asked Guillaume; and his voice immediately made the unhappy Joseph Lebas's blood run cold.

"Isn't she—the one—I love?" answered the stammering clerk.

Quite put out by his want of perspicacity, Guillaume sat down again and buried his peaked head in both his hands to ponder on the odd position he found himself in. Abashed and in despair, Joseph Lebas remained standing.

"Joseph," resumed the merchant with cold dignity, "I was speaking to you about Virginie. Love does not come at one's bidding, I know. I am acquainted with your discretion; we will forget all about it. I shall never let Augustine marry before Virginie. Your interest in the business will be ten per cent."

The clerk, to whom love gave I know not what degree of courage and eloquence, clasped his hands, began talking, and spoke to Guillaume for a quarter of an hour with so much warmth and feeling that the situation changed. If it had been a question of some business matter, the old merchant would have had fixed rules for making up his mind; but, buffeted a thousand leagues away from commerce, upon the sea of sentiment, and without a compass, he wavered irresolutely before so original an event, as he said to himself. Influenced by his natural kindness, he beat somewhat to windward.

"But, my gracious, Joseph, you know well enough that I had my two children ten years apart! Mademoiselle Chevrel was not exactly a beauty, yet she has no reason to complain of me. Do as I did, then. Don't cry about it, anyway; aren't you foolish? What is it you want? Perhaps it may all be arranged; we shall see. There is always some way of getting out of a fix. We men are not always the sentimental lovers of our wives. Do you understand me? Madame Guillaume is a very religious person, and— Well, dear me, my child, you may give your arm to Augustine this morning when you go to mass."

Such were the words uttered rather at random by Guillaume. The permission ending them delighted the love-smitten clerk; he was already thinking of one of his friends for Mademoiselle Virginie when he left the smoky room, shaking the hand of his future father-in-law and informing him, with a knowing look, that all would be arranged for the best.

"What will Madame Guillaume think?" This idea troubled the honest merchant prodigiously when he was alone.

At breakfast, Madame Guillaume and Virginie, whom the tradesman had provisionally left in ignorance of his disappointment, looked rather maliciously at Joseph Lebas, who was not a little embarrassed.

The clerk's modesty won him the friendship of his mother-in-law. The matron became so gay that she looked smilingly at M. Guillaume, and allowed herself some of those little jokes of immemorial usage in such simple-minded families. She raised the question whether Virginie and Joseph were of the same height, in order to ask them to stand back to back. These preparatory fooleries brought gloom to the face of the head of the family, and he pretended such a love of decorum that he ordered Augustine to take the head-clerk's arm in going to Saint-Leu. Ma-

dame Guillaume, astonished by this masculine delicacy, honored her husband with an approving nod of her head. The procession set out from the house, therefore, in an order that could suggest no malicious interpretation to the neighbors.

"Don't you think, Mademoiselle Augustine," said the clerk, tremblingly, "that the wife of a merchant with a good credit, such as M. Guillaume has, for example, might amuse herself a little more than your mother does—might wear diamonds, and ride in her carriage? For my part, if I were married, I should want to have all the trouble, and to see my wife happy. I would not put her at my counter. You see, in the dry-goods business, women are no longer as necessary as they used to be. M. Guillaume was right in acting as he has done, and besides it was his wife's taste. But if a woman knows how to lend a hand at the bookkeeping, the correspondence, the retail trade, the orders, and her housekeeping, so as not to remain idle, that is enough. At seven o'clock, when the shop was closed, I should amuse myself; I should go to the theater and out into society. But you are not listening to me?"

"Yes, indeed, Monsieur Joseph. What did you say about painting? That is a beautiful profession."

"Yes, I am acquainted with a master house-painter, Monsieur Lourdois, and he has some money."

Thus chatting, the family arrived at Saint Leu's Church. There Madame Guillaume reasserted her rights, and put Augustine beside herself for the first time. Virginie took her place upon the fourth chair, at the side of Lebas.

During the sermon all went well between Augustine and Théodore, who was standing behind a pillar and praying fervently to his Madonna; but, at the elevation of the Host, Madame Guillaume noticed rather late that her daughter Augustine was holding her prayer-book upside down. She made ready to scold her sharply, when, lowering her veil, she interrupted her reading and began to look in the direction where her daughter's eyes seemed to be fixed. With the aid of her eye-glasses she saw the young artist, whose aristocratic elegance indicated rather some cavalry captain out on leave than any tradesman of that quarter of the city. It would be difficult to picture the violent state of mind that Madame Guillaume fell into, after flattering herself that her daughters had been perfectly brought up, when she recognized in Augustine's heart a clandestine love, the danger of which was exaggerated to her by her prudery and ignorance. She thought her daughter depraved to the heart's core.

"Just keep your book open at the right place, mademoiselle," said she, in a voice low but shaking with anger.

She snatched the tell-tale prayer-book away quickly, and gave it back with the letters right side up.

"Don't you be so unlucky as to set your eyes anywhere else than on your prayers," she added; "if you do, you'll have to settle with me. After mass your father and I will have something to say to you."

These words were like a clap of thunder to poor Augustine. She felt a faintness come over her; but, divided between the pain she felt and her fear of making a scene in church, she had the courage to conceal her anguish. It was easy, however, to divine the agitated state of her mind by seeing her prayer-book tremble and the tears drop on every page as it was turned. From the fiery glance cast upon him by Madame Guillaume, the artist became aware of the peril his love was falling into, and he quitted the church, with rage in his heart, determined to dare everything.

"Go to your room, mademoiselle!" said Madame Guillaume to her daughter when they reached home; "we will call you; and don't you venture to leave it."

The conference the husband and the wife had together was so secret that nothing of it transpired at first. But, Virginie, who had encouraged her sister by a thousand kind remarks, pushed her complacence so far as to steal close up to her mother's chamber door, behind which the discussion was taking place, in order to overhear a few sentences. At the first

trip she made from the third to the second story, she heard her father crying out:

"Madame, do you want to kill your daughter?"

"My poor child," said Virginie to her weeping sister, "papa is standing up for you!"

"And what are they going to do to Théodore?" asked the innocent creature.

The inquisitive Virginie went downstairs again, but this time she remained longer; she learned that Lebas was in love with Augustine.

It was written that, on this memorable day, a house ordinarily quiet enough should be a veritable pandemonium.

M. Guillaume drove Joseph Lebas to despair by confiding to him Augustine's love for a stranger. Lebas, who had instructed his friend to ask for the hand of Mademoiselle Virginie, saw his hopes upset. Mademoiselle Virginie, overwhelmed by the knowledge that Joseph had in some sort refused her, was attacked by a headache. The dissension appearing in the explanation between Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, when, for the third time in their lives, they found themselves of different opinions, manifested itself in a terrible manner.

Finally, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Augustine, pale, trembling, and with red eyes, made her appearance before her father and mother. The poor child related artlessly the too brief story of her love. Reassured by a few words from her father, who promised to listen to her in silence, she gained a certain courage in pronouncing before her parents the name of her dear Théodore de Sommervieux; and she put a malicious emphasis upon the aristocratic particle.* Giving herself up to the new charm of talking about her feelings, she mustered up boldness enough to declare with innocent firmness that she loved Monsieur de Sommervieux, that she had written to him to that effect, and, with tears in her eyes, she added: "It would make me very unhappy to marry anybody else."

"But, Augustine, is it possible that you don't know what a painter is?" cried her mother in horror.

"Madame Guillaume!" said the old father to silence his wife. "Augustine," he went on, "artists are generally men upon the verge of starvation. They are too great spendthrifts ever to be anything but worthless fellows. The late Monsieur Joseph Vernet was a customer of mine, also the late Monsieur Lekain and the late Monsieur Noverre. Ah! if you knew how many tricks that Monsieur Noverre, Monsieur the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and, above all, Monsieur Philidor, played on poor Father Chevrel! They were funny chaps, I know that; they all have the gift of talk and good manners. Ah! never was your Monsieur Sumer — Somm—"

"De Sommervieux, father!"

"Well, De Sommervieux, then! Never was he as agreeable with you as Monsieur the Chevalier de Saint-Georges was with me the very day I obtained a judgment against him from the consuls. And they were people of quality in old times."

"But, father, Monsieur Théodore is of noble birth, and he has written me that he is rich. His father was called the Chevalier de Sommervieux before the Revolution."

At these words, Monsieur Guillaume looked at his terrible better-half, who, like an angry female, was tapping the floor with the tip of her foot and keeping a gloomy silence; she even avoided casting her angry eyes upon Augustine, and seemed to leave to Monsieur Guillaume the whole responsibility of so serious an affair, since her advice was not listened to.

Nevertheless, in spite of her apparent composure, when she saw her husband resigning himself so quietly to a catastrophe which was not in the line of business, she cried out:

"Indeed, monsieur, you are very weak with your daughters—but—"

The noise of a carriage stopping at the door suddenly interrupted the lecture which the old merchant was already dreading. In a moment, Madame Roguin

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* Just as did Balzac himself, by inserting the *de* in his name.—EDITOR.

was in the middle of the room and looking at the three actors in this domestic scene.

"I know all, cousin," she said, with an air of protection.

Madame Roguin had one fault, that of thinking that the wife of a Parisian notary could play the part of a lady of studied elegance.

"I know all," she repeated, "and I come into this Noah's ark like the dove with the olive-leaf. I have read that allegory in the 'Génie du Christianisme,'" said she, turning round toward Madame Guillaume; "the comparison ought to please you, cousin. Do you know," she added, smiling upon Augustine, "that this Monsieur de Sommervieux is a charming man? He has given me this morning my portrait executed in a masterly manner. It is worth at least six thousand francs."

At these words, she gently tapped Monsieur Guillaume's arm. The old merchant could not help puckering up his lips into a pout that was peculiar to him.

"I know Monsieur de Sommervieux very well," resumed the dove. "For a fortnight he has been coming to my evenings, and he is a great attraction. He has related all his troubles to me, and has chosen me for his advocate. This very morning I have learned that he adores Augustine; and he shall have her. Ah! cousin, don't shake your head like that to say no. Let me tell you that he will be made a baron, and that he has just been appointed chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the emperor himself at the Salon. Roguin has become his notary, and knows all about his affairs. Well, Monsieur de Sommervieux is the owner of landed property that yields an income of twelve thousand livres. Are you aware that the father-in-law of a man like that can amount to something—mayor of his *arrondissement*, for example? Haven't you seen Monsieur Dupont made a count of the empire and a senator, merely for coming in his capacity of mayor to greet the emperor at his entrance into Vienne? Oh! this marriage must be brought about. I adore this fine young man. His behavior toward Augustine is seen only in novels. Yes, little one, you shall be happy, and not a soul but what would like to be in your place. The Duchess of Carigliano comes to my evenings, and she just dotes on Monsieur de Sommervieux. Some gossiping tongues say she is there only on his account; as if a duchess of yesterday were out of place in the house of a Chevrel, whose family has a hundred years of perfect respectability back of it. Augustine," continued Madame Roguin, after a short pause, "I have seen the portrait. Heavens! how beautiful it is! Do you know that the emperor wanted to see it? He said, laughingly, to the vice-constable, that if there were many women like that at his court, while such a number of kings were visiting it, he would guarantee to keep peace always in Europe. Isn't that flattering?"

The storms by which this day had commenced were to resemble those of nature by ending in pleasant and serene weather. Madame Roguin displayed such powers of seduction in her talk, she managed to strike so many strings at once in the dry hearts of Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, that she at last found one to give her the advantage.

At this strange period, commerce and finance had more than ever the foolish mania for forming alliances with the great noblemen; and the generals of the empire profited very well by this state of things. Monsieur Guillaume was particularly opposed to this deplorable passion. His favorite axioms were that, to attain happiness, a woman ought to marry a man of her own station; sooner or later, one was sure to be punished for trying to climb too high; love held out so little against the annoyances of living together, that very good qualities must exist in husband and wife for them to be happy; one of the two must not know more than the other, because, above all, it was necessary to understand one another; if the husband spoke Greek and the wife Latin, they ran the risk of starving to death. He had invented this sort of a proverb: He compared the marriages thus made to those ancient stuffs

of silk and wool in which the silk always ended by cutting up the wool. However, there is so much vanity at the bottom of a man's heart, that the prudence of the pilot who guided the *Tennis-Playing Cat* so well, succumbed under Madame Roguin's aggressive volubility. The severe Madame Guillaume was the first to find reasons, in her daughter's inclination, for departing from her principles and for consenting to receive Monsieur de Sommervieux, whom she promised herself to subject to a rigorous examination.

The old merchant went in search of Joseph Lebas, and informed him of the condition of affairs. At half-past six o'clock, the dining-room made famous by the painter united under its glass roof Madame and Monsieur Roguin, the young painter and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, patiently accepting his happiness, and Mademoiselle Virginie, whose headache had ceased. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume beheld in the future their children established and the destinies of the *Tennis-Playing Cat* intrusted to skillful hands.

Their satisfaction was at its height when Théodore, at dessert, made them a present of the wonderful picture which they had not yet seen, and which represented the interior of this old shop, to which so much happiness was due.

"That is very pretty!" exclaimed Guillaume. "Just to think that somebody was willing to give thirty thousand francs for that!"

"But the lappets of my cap are there, to be sure!" put in Madame Guillaume.

"And those goods all spread out," added Lebas; "it seems as if one might take hold of them with his hand."

"Draperies always look very well," answered the painter. "We should be only too happy, we modern artists, if we could attain the perfection of antique drapery."

"So you like dry-goods?" cried Father Guillaume. "Well! well! I'll shake hands with you on that, my young friend. Since you have some respect for business, we shall understand one another. Ah! why should people despise it? The world commenced with it, for Adam sold Paradise for an apple. That was not a very successful speculation, indeed!"

And the old merchant burst into a loud, hearty laugh, excited by the champagne which he sent around the table so generously. The bandage covering the young artist's eyes was so thick that he thought his future relatives-in-law very amiable. He did not disdain to enliven them by a few sallies of wit in good taste. And he became a general favorite. In the evening, when the very substantially furnished drawing-room, as Guillaume expressed it, was deserted; while Madame Guillaume went from the table to the mantelpiece, from chandelier to candlestick, hurriedly blowing out the lights, the honest merchant, whose head was always clear, immediately business or money came into question, drew his daughter Augustine toward him, and, after seating her on his knees, spoke to her as follows:

"My dear child, you shall marry your Sommervieux, since you wish it; you may be allowed to risk your capital of happiness. I don't mean, however, to be altogether carried away by these thirty thousand francs earned by spoiling good canvases. The money that comes in so quickly goes out in the same way. Did I not hear this young madcap say this evening that, if money was round, it was so that it might roll? It may be round for extravagant people, but it is flat for the economical people that pile it up. Now, my child, this fine fellow talks of giving you carriages and diamonds. He has the money, and he may spend it on you, if he likes! I have nothing to say against that. But, as for what I give you, I don't want the money I have scraped together with so much trouble to be squandered on carriages and gewgaws. The man that spends too much is never rich. With the hundred thousand crowns of your dowry you can't quite buy all Paris. It does not matter that you will some day inherit a few hundred thousand francs; I shall make you wait for them, you may depend. as long as possible. Consequently, I took your suitor aside

into a corner, and a man who could manage the Lecoq failure did not find it very hard to make an artist consent to having his wife's property settled on herself. I shall have a sharp eye on the contract to get the settlements all right that he proposes to make on you. Well, my child, I expect to be a grandfather, indeed, and I want to begin thinking of my grandchildren at once. Swear to me right here that you will never sign any paper about money without my advice; and, if I follow after Father Chevrel too soon, swear to me that you will consult young Lebas, your brother-in-law. Promise me that."

"Yes, father, I promise."

At these words, spoken in a soft voice, the old man kissed his daughter on both cheeks. That night all the lovers slept almost as peacefully as Monsieur and Madame Guillaume.

A few months after this memorable Sunday, the high altar of Saint Leu witnessed two very different marriages. Augustine and Théodore appeared there in all the radiance of happiness, their eyes shining with love, elegantly dressed, and waited for by a splendid equipage. Coming in a good livery coach with her family, Virginie, leaning on her father's arm, followed her young sister humbly and in the simplest attire, like a shadow necessary to the harmony of the picture. Monsieur Guillaume had taken all the pains imaginable at the church to have Virginie married before Augustine; but he was pained to see on every occasion the higher and lower clergy address first the more elegant of the brides. He heard some of his neighbors particularly approve of the good sense shown by Mademoiselle Virginie, who made, they said, the more substantial marriage and remained faithful to her part of the town; while they threw out taunts, prompted by envy, at Augustine, who married an artist and a nobleman. They added, in a sort of dismay, that if the Guillaumes had ambition, it would be the ruin of the dry-goods business. An old dealer in fans having said that this spendthrift would soon bring him down to abject poverty, Father Guillaume congratulated himself *in petto* on his prudence in the matrimonial agreements. In the evening, after a sumptuous ball, followed by one of those abundant suppers the memory of which is beginning to be lost in the present generation, Monsieur and Madame Guillaume remained in their Rue du Colombier house, where the wedding-feast had come off. Monsieur and Madame Lebas returned in their hired carriage to the old house on the Rue Saint Denis to guide the fortunes of the *Tennis-Playing Cat*. The artist, intoxicated with happiness, took his dear Augustine in his arms, lifted her out quickly, when their coupé reached the Rue des Trois-Frères, and carried her into apartments which had been beautified by all the arts.

The fire of passion possessing Théodore made the young couple pass nearly a whole year without the lightest clouds coming to dim the azure of the heaven under which they lived. Life had nothing dull about it for these two lovers. Théodore lavished over every day incredible embellishments of pleasure; he delighted to vary the transports of affection with the soft languor of repose, when souls are launched so high in ecstasy that they seem to forget the corporal union. Incapable of reflection, the happy Augustine lent herself to the happiness of the passing days. She was too much in love to calculate for the future, and did not imagine that so delicious a life could ever come to an end. Happy in being now the sole pleasure of her husband, she thought that this inextinguishable love would always be for her the most beautiful of all adornments, as her devotion and obedience would be an eternal attraction.

In fine, the felicity of love had made her so brilliant that her beauty inspired her with pride, and gave her the consciousness of always being able to reign over a man so easy to set on fire as Monsieur de Sommervieux. Thus her position as a wife brought her no other lessons than those of love. In the bosom of this happiness, she was still the same ignorant little girl who used to live obscurely in the Rue Saint Denis; and she did not

dream of acquiring the manners, the education, and the tastes of the society in which she was to live. Her words were words of love; she assuredly displayed in them a sort of suppleness of mind and a certain delicacy of expression, but she used the language common to all women when they find themselves plunged into the passion that seems to be their element.

If, by chance, an idea jarring with those of Théodore was expressed by Augustine, the young artist laughed at it, as one laughs at a foreigner's first mistakes, which end by becoming wearisome, if they are not corrected. In spite of so much love, at the expiration of this year, as charming as it was fleeting, Sommervieux realized one morning the necessity of resuming his old labors and habits. His wife was in an interesting condition. He looked up his friends once more. During the long sufferings of the year when, for the first time, a young wife gives life to her child, he worked with ardor, of course; but, occasionally, he went back into the world in search of some distractions.

The house he most willingly visited was that of the Duchess of Carigliano, who had at last succeeded in attracting the celebrated artist.

When Augustine was restored to health, when her son no longer claimed that assiduous attention which keeps a mother from the pleasures of the world, Théodore had come to feel a craving for that enjoyment of self-love given us by society, when we appear in it with a beautiful woman, the object of envy and admiration. To show herself in drawing-rooms with the splendor borrowed from her husband's glory, to see other women grow jealous of her, was to Augustine a new harvest of pleasure; but it was the last glimmer of her conjugal happiness.

She began by offending her husband's vanity when, despite vain efforts, she let out her ignorance, the incorrectness of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas. Overpowered during almost two and a half years by the first transports of love, Sommervieux's character resumed, with the tranquillity of a less young possession, its natural bent and the habits temporarily turned out of their ordinary course. Poetry, painting, and the exquisite pleasures of imagination possess imprescriptible rights over cultured minds. These needs of a strong soul had not been satisfied in Théodore during these two years; they had merely found a new pasture. When the fields of love had been traversed, when the artist had, like a child, picked roses and blue-bonnets with such avidity that he did not notice his hands could no longer hold them, the scene changed. If the painter showed his wife the sketches of his most beautiful pictures, he heard her cry out, as Father Guillaume might have done: "It is very pretty!" This dispassionate admiration did not proceed from a conscientious feeling, but from her reliance upon the word of love. Augustine preferred a glance to the finest picture. The only sublimity she knew was that of the heart.

At length, Théodore could not shut his eyes to the conviction of a cruel truth—his wife was not affected by poetry, she did not dwell in his sphere, she did not follow him in all his caprices, improvisations, joys and griefs; she walked earth to earth in the real world, while he carried his head in the skies. Ordinary minds cannot appreciate the ever renewed sufferings of a being who, united to another by the closest of bonds, is obliged to keep back unceasingly the most cherished expansions of his thought, and to crush down the images that a magic power forces him to create. This torture is all the more cruel to him because his affection for his companion requires, as its first law, that one should hide nothing from the other, and that the effusions of thought should be mingled as well as the outpourings of the soul. The will of nature is not to be evaded with impunity; it is as inexorable as necessity, which is surely a sort of social nature. Sommervieux sought refuge in the calm and silence of his studio, hoping that the habit of living with artists might cultivate his wife and develop in her the benumbed germs of higher intelligence, which some superior minds believe to be latent in all beings;

but Augustine was too sincerely religious not to take alarm at the tone of the artists.

At the first dinner Théodore gave, she heard a young painter say, with that childish frivolity which she could not understand, and which absolves a jest from all irreligion :

"But, madame, your paradise is not more beautiful than Raphael's 'Transfiguration?' Yet I got tired of looking at that."

Augustine brought, therefore, into this intellectual society a spirit of distrust which escaped no one. She was an embarrassment. Embarrassed artists are merciless ; they either fly or scoff.

Madame Guillaume had, among other weaknesses, that of carrying to excess the dignity which seemed to her the proper thing for a married woman ; and, although she had often made fun of it, Augustine could not refrain from a slight imitation of her mother's prudery. This exaggeration of modesty, not always avoided by virtuous women, suggested a few roughly-penciled epigrams, the innocent raillery of which was in too good taste for Sommervieux to get angry at them. If these jests had been even more savage, they were, after all, only a sort of revenge taken on him by his friends. But nothing could be slight to a mind receiving outside impressions as easily as that of Théodore. Consequently he began insensibly to feel a coldness that could only go on increasing. To arrive at conjugal happiness, a mountain must be climbed, the narrow summit of which is very near a slope as steep as it is slippery, and the painter's love was descending this slope. He judged his wife incapable of appreciating the moral considerations that justified, in his own eyes, the singularity of his manners toward her, and deemed himself quite innocent in hiding from her thoughts which he did not understand and faults not to be excused before the tribunal of the average woman's conscience. Augustine shut herself up in dull and silent pain. These secret feelings interposed between husband and wife a veil that was to thicken from day to day.

Although her husband was not wanting in kindness to her, Augustine could not help trembling as she saw him reserve for society the treasures of wit and grace which he was wont of old to lay at her feet. Soon, she gave an unpleasant interpretation to the bright sayings that pass current in the world about the inconstancy of men. She did not complain, but her attitude was equivalent to reproaches.

Three years after her marriage, this young and handsome woman, who rode by so brilliantly in her brilliant equipage, who lived in a sphere of glory and wealth envied by so many people thoughtless and incapable of justly estimating the conditions of life, was the prey of violent griefs. Her color paled ; she reflected, she compared ; then unhappiness unfolded to her the first texts of experience. She resolved to remain courageously within the circle of her duties, hoping that this generous conduct would make her sooner or later recover her husband's love ; but this was not to be.

When Sommervieux, weary of labor, emerged from his studio, Augustine did not conceal her work so promptly but that the painter could see his wife was mending, with the care of a good housekeeper, the linen of the house and his own. She furnished, liberally and without a murmur, the money necessary for her husband's extravagance ; but, in her desire to guard her dear Théodore's fortune, she showed herself economical on her own account and in certain details of domestic management. This conduct is incompatible with the free-and-easy ways of artists, who, at the end of their career, have enjoyed life so much that they never ask themselves the reason of their ruin. It is idle to note each of the shades of color through which the brilliant tint of their honeymoon faded away and left them in deep darkness.

One evening, the saddened Augustine, who had long been hearing her husband speak enthusiastically of the Duchess of Carigliano, received from a lady friend some wickedly charitable information concerning the nature of the attachment which Sommervieux had conceived for this celebrated coquette of the Imperial

Court. At the age of twenty-one, in all the splendor of youth and beauty, Augustine saw herself betrayed for a woman of thirty-six. Feeling wretched in the midst of society and its, to her, desolate entertainments, the poor child understood nothing of the admiration she excited nor of the envy she inspired. Her face took on a new expression. Melancholy infused into her features the sweetness of resignation and the pallor of a despised love.

It was not long before attention was paid her by the most fascinating of men; but she remained lonely and pure in heart. Some contemptuous words dropped by her husband gave her incredible despair. A fatal light made her catch a glimpse of the want of contact which, in consequence of the deficiencies of her education, prevented the perfect union of her soul with Théodore's; she had love enough to absolve him and to condemn herself. She wept tears of blood, and realized, only too late, that there are misalliances of intellect as well as misalliances of manners and rank. Musing on the spring-tide delights of her marriage she comprehended the extent of her past happiness, and agreed within herself that so rich a harvest of love was a whole life, which could only be atoned for by unhappiness. Yet she loved too sincerely to lose all hope; and, at twenty-one years of age, she ventured to undertake to complete her education and to make her imagination at least worthy of the one she admired.

"If I am not a poet," she said to herself, "at least I am going to understand poetry."

And, displaying now that strength of will and that energy which all women possess whenever they are in love, Madame de Sommervieux attempted to change her character, her manners, and her habits; but in devouring volumes and studying bravely she only succeeded in becoming less ignorant. Alertness of mind and the graces of conversation are a gift of nature or the fruit of an education commenced in the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but could not sing with taste. She understood literature and the beauties of poetry, but it was too late for her to enrich her rebellious memory with them. She listened with pleasure to the chat of society, but she contributed nothing brilliant to it herself. Her religious ideas and the prejudices of her youth militated against the complete emancipation of her intelligence. At length there had sprung up a feeling against her in Théodore's mind which she could not vanquish. The artist laughed at the people who praised up his wife to him, and his merriment had some basis. He awed this young and touching creature so much that she trembled in his presence or when they were talking together. Embarrassed by her excessive desire of pleasing, she felt her mind and her knowledge melt away in mere feeling. Augustine's fidelity, even, was displeasing to this unfaithful husband, who seemed to want her to commit faults by accusing her virtue of a lack of sensibility. Augustine tried in vain to abdicate her reason, to bend to her husband's caprices and fancies, and to devote herself to the selfishness of his vanity; she did not reap the fruit of her sacrifices. Perhaps they had both let the moment pass when two souls can understand each other. At last, the young wife's too sensitive heart received one of those blows that wrench the bonds of attachment so forcibly as to make one believe them broken. She felt herself isolated; but soon a fatal thought suggested to her that she should seek consolation and counsel in the bosom of her family.

One morning, therefore, she turned her steps toward the grotesque façade of the humble and quiet house where her childhood had been spent. She sighed as she saw once more that casement, from which she had long ago thrown a first kiss to the man who was now shedding over her life as much glory as unhappiness. Nothing was changed in the den where the dry-goods business was going on as flourishingly as ever. Augustine's sister occupied her mother's place at the old counter. The afflicted young woman met her brother-in-law with his pen back of his ear, and she was hardly listened to,

so busy did he appear to be. The formidable signs of a general taking account of stock were manifest around him; so he left her, begging her to excuse him. She was received coldly enough by her sister, who bore her somewhat of a grudge. In truth, Augustine, brilliant, and alighting from a handsome carriage, had never come to see her sister except in passing. The wife of the prudent Lebas imagined that money was the real cause of this early visit, and she maintained an air of reserve that made Augustine smile more than once. The painter's wife saw that, save for the lappets on the cap, her mother had found in Virginie a successor sure to keep up the antique honor of the *Tennis-Playing Cat*. At luncheon, she noticed certain changes in the regulations of the house that did honor to the good sense of Joseph Lebas; the clerks did not rise at dessert, they were given the liberty of talking, and the abundance of the table announced comfort without extravagance. The elegant young woman found there tickets for a box at the Français, where she remembered having seen her sister at long intervals. Madame Lebas wore over her shoulders a cashmere shawl, the magnificence of which proved her husband's generosity toward her. The couple, indeed, progressed with their century. Augustine was soon penetrated with emotion on realizing, during two-thirds of this day, the equable happiness, without enthusiasm, it is true, but yet without storms, which this well-matched pair enjoyed.

They had taken up life like a commercial enterprise, where it is chiefly necessary to give strict attention to business. Not having encountered an excessive love in her husband, the wife had applied herself to bringing it to life. Insensibly induced to esteem and cherish Virginie, the time it required for happiness to appear was a guarantee of its duration to Joseph Lebas and his wife. Therefore, when the plaintive Augustine set forth her painful situation, she had to endure the flood of commonplaces which the moral philosophy of the Rue Saint Denis furnished to her sister.

"The mischief is done, wife," said Joseph Lebas; "we must try to give our sister good advice."

Then, the clever merchant analyzed in a dull way the resources which the laws and customs might offer Augustine for coming out of this crisis; he numbered, so to speak, his remarks on them, arranged them in categories according to their importance, as if it had been a question of merchandise of different qualities; then he put them in the scales, weighed them, and concluded by developing the necessity for his sister-in-law to make up her mind to something desperate, which did not at all satisfy the love she still felt for her husband; and this feeling was roused in all its strength when she heard Joseph Lebas talking of legal proceedings.

Augustine thanked her two friends, and went back home more undecided even than she had been before consulting them. She ventured then to go to the old house in the Rue du Colombier, with the intention of confessing her miseries to her father and mother; for she resembled those sick people in such a desperate strait that they try all sorts of prescriptions, and even trust themselves to old women's remedies. The aged couple received their daughter with a show of feeling that quite moved her. This visit brought them a distraction, and was as good as money to them. For four years they had been going through life like navigators without aim and without compass. Seated at their fireside, they related to one another all the disasters of the Maximum, their former purchases of dry-goods, the way they had avoided bankruptcies, and especially that famous Lecoq failure—Father Guillaume's battle of Marengo. When they had exhausted the old lawsuits, they recapitulated the amounts of their most profitable inventories, and told each other the old stories of the Saint Denis Quarter.

At two o'clock, Father Guillaume went to take a look at the establishment of the *Tennis-Playing Cat;* on the way back, he stopped at all the shops in other days his rivals, and their young proprietors had hopes of enticing the old merchant into some risky discount, which, as was his

custom, he never positively refused. Two good Norman horses were dying of fat in the stable of the house; Madame Guillaume never used them, except when she was drawn to the high mass of her parish every Sunday. Three times a week this respectable couple had company to dinner.

Through the influence of his son-in-law, Sommervieux, Father Guillaume had been appointed a member of the advisory committee for the uniforming of the troops. Since her husband had thus found a place high up in the administration, Madame Guillaume had taken a resolution to keep up appearances. Her apartments were encumbered with so many gold and silver ornaments, and so many pieces of tasteless furniture of a certain value, that the simplest room there resembled a chapel. Economy and extravagance seemed to contend in each of the accessories of this house. One would have said that Monsieur Guillaume had had in view an investment of his money, even when he was buying a candlestick. In the midst of this bazaar, the richness of which gave evidence of the couple's lack of occupation, Sommervieux's celebrated picture had obtained the place of honor, and was a great comfort to Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, who, twenty times in the course of the day, turned eyes tricked out with eye-glasses toward this image of their former life, to them so stirring and amusing.

The sight of this house and of these apartments, where everything had a flavor of old age and mediocrity, the spectacle presented by these two beings seemingly cast ashore upon a golden rock far from the world and from life-giving ideas, surprised Augustine. She contemplated at this moment the second part of the picture whose beginning had struck her in the house of Joseph Lebas—the picture of a life, restless, although without advance; a species of mechanical and instinctive existence similar to that of beavers. She had then I know not what kind of a pride in her own sorrows, remembering they had their source in eighteen months of happiness which was worth in her eyes a thousand such existences as this, with its apparently horrible void; but she concealed this rather uncharitable feeling, and put forth for her aged parents the new graces of her mind, the coquettishness of tenderness which love had revealed to her, and favorably disposed them to listen to her matrimonial grievances. The old people had a weakness for this sort of confidences. Madame Guillaume wished to be informed of the slightest details of this strange life, which, to her, had something fabulous about it. The travels of the Baron de la Hontan, which she was always commencing without ever finishing, had nothing more unprecedented to tell her about the savages of Canada.

"What, child, your husband shuts himself up with women, and you are silly enough to believe he is drawing them?"

At this exclamation, the grandmother laid her glasses upon a little work-stand, shook out her skirts, and placed her clasped hands on her knees, elevated by a foot-stove, her favorite pedestal.

"But, mother, all painters are obliged to have models."

"He took good care not to tell us all about that when he asked your hand in marriage. If I had known it, I should not have given my daughter to a man engaged in such a trade. Our religion forbids such horrors; they are not moral. And at what time did you say he came home at night?"

"About one or two o'clock."

The husband and wife looked at one another in deep astonishment.

"So he gambles?" said Monsieur Guillaume. "It was only the gamblers, in my time, who went home so late."

Augustine pouted her lips a little to repel this accusation.

"He must make you spend some tiresome nights waiting for him," resumed Madame Guillaume. "But, no, you go to bed, don't you? And when he has lost money, the monster wakes you up."

"No, mother; he is sometimes, on the contrary, very cheerful. Quite often, when it is a fine night, he asks me to get up and take a walk in the woods."

"In the woods, at such hours? You must have very small apartments, if his chamber and drawing-rooms are not enough, and he has to run out of doors in that way. But it is to make you catch cold that the rascal proposes such excursions to you. He wants to get rid of you. Was there ever a steady man, in a regular business, who galloped about so like a were-wolf?"

"But, mother, you don't understand that he needs excitement to develop his talent. He is very fond of scenes which—"

"Ah! I should make him have some fine scenes, that I should!" exclaimed Madame Guillaume, interrupting her daughter. "How can you have any patience with such a man? For one thing, I don't like it that he drinks only water. That is not healthy. Why does he show such an aversion to looking at women when they are eating? What a strange sort of man! He must be crazy. All that you have told us about him isn't possible. A man cannot start out from his house without breathing a word and not come home until ten days afterward. He told you that he had been in Dieppe to paint the sea. Does the sea need painting? It is all humbug what he makes you swallow."

Augustine opened her mouth to defend her husband, but Madame Guillaume silenced her with a wave of the hand, a remnant of habit causing her to obey; and her mother cried out in a dry tone:

"Well, don't talk to me about that man! He has never set foot inside a church, except to see you and to marry you. People without religion are capable of anything. Did Guillaume ever dream of keeping a secret from me, of going three whole days without saying bo to me, and after that of chattering like a one-eyed magpie?"

"My dear mother, you judge these clever people too severely. If they had just such ideas as others, they would no longer be people of talent."

"Well, let the people of talent keep to themselves and not get married. Do you mean to tell me that a man of talent is to make his wife miserable, and, because he has talent, it is to be all right? Talent! talent! There is not so very much talent in saying black and white every minute like him; in cutting off other people's words; in beating the drum in one's own house; in never letting you know what foot you are to dance on; in forcing a woman not to amuse herself until her husband happens to be in good spirits, and to be sad as soon as ever he is sad."

"But, mother, it is the characteristic of these imaginations—"

"What are these imaginations?" resumed Madame Guillaume, again interrupting her daughter. "He has a fine imagination, upon my word! What kind of a man is it, that suddenly, without consulting his physician, takes the notion into his head to eat only vegetables? If it were on account of religion, his dieting might be of some use to him; but he hasn't any more religion than a Huguenot. Was there ever a man seen like him, to love horses more than he loves his fellow-beings; to have his hair frizzled like a heathen's, to cover up statues with muslin, to shut his windows in broad day so as to work by lamplight? I must say, if he were not so grossly immoral, it would be well to put him in the insane asylum. Consult Monsieur Loraux, the vicar of Saint Sulpice; ask what he thinks of it all, and he will tell you that your husband does not act like a Christian."

"Oh, mother! can you believe—"

"Yes, I do believe it! You have loved him, and you don't notice these things. But, soon after he was married, I remember meeting him in the Champs-Elysées. He was on horseback. Well, sometimes he would gallop as fast as he could go, and then he would stop and ride on at a snail's-pace. I said to myself at that time: 'There is a man who hasn't any judgment.'"

"Ah!" cried Monsieur Guillaume, as he rubbed his hands, "how lucky it was I had your property settled upon you when you married such an original genius!"

When Augustine was imprudent enough to recount the real grievances which she

had to complain of against her husband, the two elderly people remained mute with indignation. The word divorce was soon pronounced by Madame Guillaume. At the word divorce the retired merchant was waked up, as it were. Stimulated by his love for his daughter, and also by the excitement a lawsuit would impart to his uneventful life, Father Guillaume began to speak. He put himself at the head of the petition for a divorce, managed it, almost did the pleading; he offered his daughter to pay all the expenses, to interview the judges, the attorneys and counselors—to move heaven and earth. Madame de Sommervieux, in alarm, refused her father's services; said that she did not want to be separated from her husband, even if she were ten times more unhappy, and had nothing further to tell of her sorrows. After her parents had overwhelmed her with all those mute and comforting little attentions by which the two old people endeavored to indemnify her, but in vain, for the pangs of her heart, Augustine went away feeling the impossibility of obtaining a fair judgment of superior men from weak minds. She learned that a woman must hide from all the world, even from her own parents, misfortunes that encounter sympathy with so great difficulty. The storms and sufferings of the higher spheres are only appreciated by the noble minds who inhabit them. In everything, we can only be judged by our peers.

The poor Augustine found herself once more, therefore, in the chill atmosphere of her home, and delivered up to the horror of her own meditations. Study was nothing more to her, since study had not won back her husband's heart for her. Initiated into the secrets of these fiery souls, but deprived of their resources, she participated strongly in their pains without sharing their pleasures. She had become disgusted with the world, which seemed to her mean and small in presence of the events of passion. Her life was indeed a failure.

One evening she was struck with a thought that came to light up her dark sorrows like a celestial sunbeam. This idea could only have been favored by a heart as pure and virtuous as was hers. She resolved to call upon the Duchess of Carigliano, not to ask for her husband's heart again, but to be informed of the artifices which had robbed her of it; to interest this proud woman of the world in the mother of her friend's children; to move her and make her an accomplice of her future happiness, as she was the instrument of her present unhappiness. One day, therefore, the timid Augustine, steeled with a superhuman courage, got into her carriage at two o'clock in the afternoon to try to make her way into the boudoir of the celebrated coquette, who was never visible before that hour. Madame de Sommervieux was not yet acquainted with the antique and sumptuous mansions of the Faubourg Saint Germain. As she traversed these majestic vestibules, these grand staircases, these immense drawing-rooms, ornamented with flowers despite the inclemency of winter, and decorated with the taste peculiar to women who are born in opulence, or with the elegant habits of high life, Augustine felt a fearful sinking of her heart. She envied the secrets of this splendor, of which she had never had any idea; she breathed an air of grandeur that explained to her the attraction this house had for her husband. When she reached the duchess's smaller apartments, she experienced jealousy and a sort of despair in her admiration of the sumptuous arrangement of the furniture, the draperies, and the hanging-stuffs. Disorder there became graceful, and luxury affected a species of disdain for wealth. The perfumes diffused through this mild atmosphere flattered the sense of smell without offending it. The furnishings of the rooms were in perfect harmony with a view through the clearest of glass upon the lawns of grounds planted with green trees. Everything was charming, and the calculation in it all was not felt. The genius of the mistress of the house showed itself to the full in the drawing-room where Augustine was waiting. She sought to divine the character of her rival by looking at the objects scattered

about; but there was something impenetrable in the disorder, as well as in the symmetry, and it was to the simple Augustine a sealed letter. All that she could see there was that the duchess was a superior woman, as women go. Then a painful thought occurred to her.

"Alas! is it true," said she to herself, "that a loving and simple heart does not suffice for an artist; and, to balance the weight of these strong souls, must they be united to feminine souls whose power is equal to their own? If I had been brought up like this siren, our arms, at least, would be well matched in the hour of our strife."

"But I am not at home!"

These sharp and short words, though pronounced in a low tone in the adjoining boudoir, were audible to Augustine, and her heart beat more rapidly.

"The lady is right here," replied the chamber-maid.

"You haven't any sense. Let her come in, then," answered the duchess; and her voice, becoming sweeter, took on the kindly accent of politeness. Evidently, she was now desirous of being heard.

Augustine went forward timidly. In the midst of this bright boudoir, she saw the duchess reclining luxuriously upon an ottoman of green velvet, placed in the center of a kind of half-circle formed by the soft folds of muslin hung upon a yellow background. Ornaments in gilt bronze, arranged with exquisite taste, raised still further this sort of dais, under which the duchess was posed like an antique statue. The dark color of the velvet allowed her to lose no means of fascination. A twilight, becoming to her beauty, seemed to be rather a reflection than a light. Some rare flowers lifted their scented heads above the richest of Sèvres vases. At the moment this picture was presented to the astonished Augustine's eyes, she was stepping so softly that she managed to surprise a glance from the enchantress. This glance seemed to say to a person whom the painter's wife did not at first percieve: "Stay here; you are going to see a pretty woman, and you will make her visit less tiresome for me."

At the sight of Augustine, the duchess rose and had her sit down beside herself.

"To what am I indebted for the pleasure of this visit, madame?" said she, with a most gracious smile.

"Why so much falseness?" thought Augustine, and she responded only by an inclination of her head.

This silence was unavoidable. The young woman saw before her one witness too many to this scene. This personage was, of all the colonels in the army, the youngest, the most elegant, and the best built. His half-civilian dress showed off the graces of his person. His face, full of life and youth, and very expressive already, was still further enlivened by a small mustache, turned up at the ends and as black as jet; by a well-developed imperial; by side-whiskers carefully combed, and by a forest of black hair in picturesque confusion. He was toying with a riding-whip, manifesting an easiness and freedom that suited the satisfied look of his physiognomy, as well as the elegance of his toilet. The ribbons in his buttonhole were knotted rather disdainfully, and he appeared much vainer of his handsome figure than of his bravery. Augustine looked at the Duchess of Carigliano and indicated the colonel by a glance, the meaning of which was understsod at once.

"Well, good-by, D'Aiglemont; we shall meet again in the Bois de Boulogne."

These words were spoken by the siren as if they were the result of an agreement made previous to Augustine's arrival; she accompanied them with a threatening look, which the officer deserved, perhaps, for the admiration he showed in gazing at the modest flower that contrasted so well with the haughty duchess. The young fop bowed in silence, turned on the heels of his boots, and dashed gracefully out of the boudoir. Just at that moment, Augustine, watching her rival follow the brilliant officer with her eyes, surprised in this glance a sentiment whose fleeting expressions are well-known to all women. She thought, with the deepest distress, that her visit was destined to be of no

avail; this crafty duchess was too greedy of homage not to have a pitiless heart.

"Madame," said Augustine, in a broken voice, "the step I am now taking toward you will seem very strange to you; but despair has its madness, and must render everything excusable. I understand only too well why Théodore prefers your house to any other, and why your mind has so much influence over him. Alas! I have merely to look within myself to find more than sufficient reasons. But I adore my husband, madame. Two years of tears have not effaced his image from my heart, although I have lost his. In my distraction, I have dared to conceive the idea of struggling with you; and I come to you to ask you by what means I can triumph over yourself. Oh, madame!" cried the young woman, ardently seizing upon the hand of her rival, who let her take it. "I shall never pray to God for my own happiness with as much fervor as I will implore Him for yours, if you will help me to reconquer, I do not say the love, but the friendship of Sommervieux. I have no further hope but in you. Ah! tell me, how have you been able to please him, and to make him forget the early days of—"

At these words, Augustine, choking with uncontrollable sobs, was obliged to stop. Ashamed of her weakness, she hid her face in her handkerchief and deluged it with her tears.

"What a child you are, my dear little beauty!" said the duchess, who, charmed by the novelty of this scene, and moved, despite herself, by receiving the homage done her by the most perfect virtue perhaps in Paris, took the young wife's handkerchief and herself began to wipe the weeping eyes, soothing her with a few monosyllables murmured with gracious pity.

After a moment's silence, the coquette, imprisoning poor Augustine's pretty hands between her own, which had a rare character of noble beauty and power, said to her in a sweet and affectionate voice:

"As a first piece of advice, I will counsel you not to cry so; tears spoil one's beauty. You must set yourself resolutely against such griefs as bring on illness, for love does not stay long by a bed of pain. Melancholy imparts in the beginning a certain grace which is pleasing, but it ends by lengthening out the features and withering the most fascinating of all faces. Then, our tyrants have self-love enough to want their slaves to be always cheerful."

"Ah! madame, my feelings do not rest alone with me. How can one, without suffering a thousand deaths, see a face wan, colorless, and indifferent that was once wont to beam with love and joy! I cannot command my heart."

"So much the worse, my dear beauty; but I believe I already know all your story. To begin with, you may rest assured that if your husband has been unfaithful to you, I am not his accomplice. If I have been glad to see him in my drawing-room, it was, I will confess, from a sort of vanity; he was famous and went nowhere. I like you too much already to tell you all the follies he has committed on my account. I shall reveal to you only a single one, because it may, perhaps, help us to bring him back to you, and to punish him for the audacity he has shown toward me. He would compromise me in the end. I know too much about the world, my dear, to wish to put myself at the discretion of too superior a man. You know that we must let them pay court to us, but it is a mistake to marry them. We women ought to admire men of genius, to enjoy them like a play, but to live with them—never! Nonsense! that would be trying to take pleasure in looking at the machinery of the opera instead of staying in one's box and enjoying from there its brilliant illusions. But in your case, my poor child, the mischief is done, isn't it? Well, you must endeavor to take up arms against tyranny."

"Ah! madame, before coming in here and seeing you I have learned to know some artifices which I did not suspect."

"Well, come and see me occasionally, and it will not be long before you possess the science of these trifles which are indeed rather important. External things are half of life to fools; and, as far as that goes, more than one man of talent is

a fool, notwithstanding all his intellect. But I will wager that you have never been able to refuse Théodore anything."

"How can one, madame, refuse anything to the man one loves?"

"You poor innocent, I shall adore you for your simplicity. You must know, then, that the more we are in love, the less must we let the man perceive, especially a husband, the extent of our passion. It is the most loving one that is tyrannized over, and, what is worse, is sooner or later deserted."

"What, madame, must we then dissimulate, calculate, turn false, make ourselves an artificial character, and that for all the time? Oh! how can people live so? Can you?"

She hesitated, and the duchess smiled.

"My dear," resumed the great lady, in a grave voice, "married happiness has always been a speculation, an affair demanding particular attention. If you continue to talk passion when I am talking to you about marriage, we shall not understand one another pretty soon. Listen to me," she went on to say, in a confidential sort of tone. "I have been enabled to see some of the famous men of our time. The married ones, with a few exceptions, had wedded women of no account. Well, these women ruled them as the emperor rules us, and were, if not loved, at least respected by them. I am fond enough of secrets, especially of those that concern us, to have amused myself in seeking the solution of this enigma. Well, my angel, these good women had the talent to analyze the character of their husbands. Without being frightened, like you, by their superiorities, they had adroitly remarked the qualities wanting in them; and whether they possessed these qualities, or merely feigned to have them, they found means to make such a great display of them to their husbands' eyes that they ended by imposing upon them. Now, you must know, too, that these souls which appear so great have all a bit of folly in them, and we ought to be able to make the most of it. Taking the firm resolution to lord it over them, never swerving from this purpose, shaping toward it all our actions, ideas, coquetries, we master these eminently capricious minds, which, by the very mobility of their thoughts, furnish us with the means of influencing them."

"Oh, heavens!" cried the affrighted young woman. "So that is life! It is a combat."

"Where one must always threaten," resumed the duchess, laughingly, "our power is all artificial; also one must never let one's self be despised by a man, for it is impossible to rise from such a fall except by odious maneuvers. Come," she added, "I am going to give you the means of putting your husband in chains."

She rose to guide smilingly the young and innocent apprentice in conjugal wiles through the labyrinth of her small palace. They both came to a private staircase leading to the reception-rooms. When the duchess had opened the spring of the door, she stopped, looked at Augustine with an inimitable air of slyness and grace.

"There, the Duke of Carigliano adores me, yet he dares not enter by this door without my permission—and he is a man who is in the habit of commanding thousands of soldiers. He is equal to facing batteries, but before me—he is afraid."

Augustine sighed. They reached a sumptuous gallery, where the painter's wife was conducted by the duchess before the portrait which Théodore had made of Mademoiselle Guillaume. At sight of it, Augustine uttered a cry.

"I knew very well that it wasn't in our house any more," said she; "but—here!"

"My dear child, I exacted it merely to see to what degree of stupidity a man of genius can go. Sooner or later, it would have been sent back to you by me, for I was not expecting the pleasure of seeing here the original before the copy. While we are finishing our conversation, I will have it taken to your carriage. If, armed with this talisman, you are not mistress over your husband for a hundred years, you are not a woman, and you will deserve your fate."

Augustine kissed the duchess's hand, and the duchess pressed her to her heart and kissed her with a tenderness all the more marked because it was to be forgotten on the morrow.

This scene would perhaps have forever ruined the candor and purity of a woman less virtuous than Augustine, to whom the secrets revealed by the duchess might prove equally salutary and fatal, for the crafty policy of the higher social spheres was no more suited to Augustine than was Joseph Lebas's narrow reason or Madame Guillaume's silly morality. A strange effect of the false positions where the least misconstructions of life place us! Augustine then resembled a shepherd of the Alps surprised by an avalanche; if he hesitates, or if he stops to listen to his companion's cries, he is most frequently lost. In these great crises the heart breaks, or turns to stone.

Madame de Sommervieux went home in a state of agitation that it would be difficult to describe. Her conversation with the Duchess of Carigliano awakened a throng of contradictory ideas in her mind. She was like the sheep in the fable—full of courage in the absence of the wolf. She harangued herself and traced out admirable plans of conduct; she imagined a thousand stratagems in coquetry; she even talked to her husband, finding, far away from him, all the resources of that true eloquence which never abandons women; then, in thinking of Théodore's sharp and clear glance, she began to tremble. When she inquired if her husband were at home, her voice failed her. Learning that he was not coming to dinner, she felt a tinge of inexplicable joy. Like the criminal appealing against his sentence of death, a respite, however short it might be, seemed to her a whole life. She placed the portrait in her chamber, and waited for her husband, giving herself up to all the pangs of hope. She was too well aware that this experiment was to decide her entire future not to shudder at every sort of noise, even at the murmur of her clock, which seemed to weigh upon her terrors by measuring them to her. She endeavored to cheat time by a thousand artifices. She was seized with the idea of making a toilet that might render her similar to the portrait in every particular. Then, knowing her husband's restless character, she had her apartment lighted up in an unusual manner, certain that on coming home curiosity would bring him to her. It struck midnight, when, at the coachman's cry, the door of the house was opened. The painter's carriage rolled in on the pavement of the silent courtyard.

"What is the meaning of this illumination?" asked Théodore, in a joyous voice, as he entered his wife's chamber.

Augustine skillfully took advantage of so favorable a moment; she fell upon her husband's neck, and pointed out the portrait to him. The artist remained as motionless as a rock, and his eyes were directed alternately toward Augustine and toward the accusing canvas. The timid and half-dead wife watched the changing brow—her husband's terrible brow—and saw the expressive wrinkles gradually accumulate on it like clouds; then she thought she felt the blood curdling in her veins when, by a blazing glance and a profoundly hollow voice, she was questioned.

"Where did you find this picture?"

"The Duchess of Carigliano gave it to me."

"Did you ask her for it?"

"I did not know she had it."

The sweetness, or rather the enchanting melody, of this angel's voice might have softened cannibals, but not an artist writhing with the torture of his wounded vanity.

"That is worthy of her!" exclaimed the artist, in thundering tones. "I shall have my revenge," he said, as he strode about. "She shall die of shame. I will paint her! yes, I will picture her with the features of *Messalina* stealing out in the night from the palace of *Claudius*."

"Théodore!" said a dying voice.

"I will kill her."

"My dear!"

"She is in love with that little cavalry colonel, because he rides horseback so well."

"Théodore!"

"Oh, let me alone!" said the painter to his wife, with a sound of voice that almost resembled the roar of a wild beast.

It would be odious to paint this whole scene, at the end of which the fury of wrath suggested to the artist words and acts that an older woman than Augustine would have attributed to insanity.

Toward eight o'clock on the morning of the next day, Madame Guillaume surprised her daughter, pale, with red eyes, hair in disorder, holding in her hand a handkerchief soaked with tears, gazing on the floor at the scattered fragments of a torn canvas and the pieces of a great shattered gilt frame. Augustine, nearly insensible from grief, pointed at these remains with a gestnre of despair.

"And there perhaps is a great loss!" cried the old regent of the *Tennis-Playing Cat*. "It was a good likeness, that is true; but I have learned that there is on the Boulevard a man who makes charming portraits for fifty crowns."

"Ah, mother!"

"Poor child, you are right!" replied Madame Guillaume, who mistook the expression of the glance her daughter gave her. "Well, my dear, there is no such tender love as a mother's. My darling, I can guess everything; but come and confide your griefs to me—I will comfort you. Haven't I already told you that that man is crazy? Your chambermaid has related some pretty stories to me; indeed he is a real monster!"

Augustine laid a finger upon her pallid lips, as if to implore her mother for a moment's silence. During this terrible night, misery had made her find that patient resignation which, in mothers and in loving women, surpasses in its effects human energy, and perhaps reveals in the heart of women the existence of certain strings that God has refused to man.

. . . .

An inscription engraved upon a cippus in the cemetery of Montmartre indicates that Madame de Sommervieux died at the age of twenty-seven. In the simple lines of this epitaph a friend to this timid creature sees the last act of a drama. Every year, on the solemn second of November, he never passes by this marble without asking himself whether stronger women are not needed than was Augustine for the powerful embraces of genius.

"Humble and modest flowers growing up in valleys die, perchance," he says to himself, "when they are transplanted too near the heavens—the regions where tempests arise, where the sun is scorching."

VII.

A TRAGEDY BY THE SEA.

THE path leading from Le Croisic to Batz town was not a beaten way; a puff of wind was enough to efface every trace left by the cart-wheels or the print of the horses' hoofs. However, our guide's practiced eye was able to discover it by the spoor of cattle and sheep. This path in some places went down to the sea, and in others rose toward the fields, according to the lay of the land and the position of the rocks which it skirted.

It was noon, and we had only gone halfway.

"We can rest over there," I said, pointing to a headland composed of lofty rocks. It looked as if we might find a nook there.

When the fisherman, whose eyes followed the direction of my finger, heard this, he shook his head, and said: "There is some one there. Every one who goes from Batz town to Le Croisic, or from Le Croisic to Batz town, always goes round another way, so as not to pass him."

The man murmured these words in a low tone that suggested mystery.

"Is it a robber, then, or a murderer?"

Our guide's only answer was a deep, hollow exclamation, which redoubled our curiosity.

"But if we do go by, will anything happen to us?"

"Oh! no."

"Will you go by with us?"

"No, monsieur."

"Well, we will go, if you can assure us that there is no danger."

"I could not say that," answered the fisherman quickly. "I only know that he who is there will not say anything to you, and will do you no harm. Good God! only he won't stir an inch from where he sits."

"What is he then?"

"A man!"

I never heard two syllables uttered in such a tragic tone. At that moment we were about twenty paces from a creek in which the sea was tossing. Our guide took the road that skirted the rocks; we went on straight in front of us, but Pauline took my arm. Our guide hastened his steps, in order to reach the place where the two paths met, at the same time that we did. He evidently divined that after we had seen the man we should walk on quickly. This circumstance inflamed our curiosity, which then became so burning that our hearts beat as if we had been struck by a feeling of terror. In spite of the heat of the day, and a sort of fatigue caused by our walk through the sands, our souls were still filled with the indescribable languor of intense delight. They were full of pure pleasure that can only be expressed by comparing it to the pleasure one feels in listening to exquisite music, such music as the "Andiamo mio ben" of Mozart. The melting together of two hearts in one pure thought is like the blending of two beautiful voices in song.

To be able to appreciate fully the emotion that seized us afterward, you must have shared the half voluptuous delight into which our morning's ramble had plunged us. Sit for a while and watch a wood-dove, with all its beautiful shades of color, perched on a branch that sways above a rivulet, and you will cry aloud with grief when you see it struck to the heart by the iron claws of a hawk and borne away with speed, swift as powder drives a bullet from a gun.

We soon reached a small cave, in front of which was a narrow ledge, a hundred feet above the sea, protected from the fury of the waves by a sheer wall of rock. Before we had gone two steps on this platform, we felt an electric shiver run through us, not unlike the start one gives at a sudden noise in the middle of a still night.

We saw seated on a piece of rock a man who looked at us.

His glance darted from his bloodshot eyes like the flash of a cannon. The stoic stillness of his limbs I can only liken to the unchanging piles of granite amid which he sat. His whole body remained rigid, as if he had been turned into stone; only his eyes moved slowly. After casting upon us this look which had moved us so strongly, he withdrew his eyes and fixed them on the ocean stretched out at his feet. In spite of the light that streamed upward from it, he gazed upon it without lowering his eyelids, as the eagle is said to gaze upon the sun. He did not raise his eyes again. Try and recall, my dear uncle, one of those old butts of oak that time has stripped of all its branches, whose knotted trunk rears its fantastic form by the side of some lonely road; it will give you a true likeness of this man. His was the frame of Hercules in ruins, the face of Olympian Zeus wasted by age, and grief, and coarse food, and the hard life of them that toil on the sea; it was as it were charred by a thunderbolt. I looked at his hard and hairy hands, and I saw the sinews like bands of iron. In his whole frame were manifest signs of the same natural power.

In a corner of the little cave I noticed a great heap of moss, and a sort of rough shelf formed by chance in the face of the granite. On this shelf stood an earthern pitcher covered with the fragment of a round loaf. Never had my imagination —when it bore me into the deserts where the first Christian hermits dwelt—drawn

a picture of grander religion or more terrible repentance. Even you, my dear uncle, who have experience of the confessional, have never perhaps seen such noble remorse; here was remorse drowned in the waves of supplication, the perpetual supplication of dumb despair.

This fisherman, this mariner, this rough Breton was sublime; I knew it, but I knew not why. Had those eyes wept? That hand, like the hand of a rough-hewn statue, had it struck? That rugged brow, stamped with fierce integrity, whereon strength had left the impress of the gentleness that is the heritage of all true strength—that brow, scarred deep with furrows, was it in harmony with a great heart? Why did the man sit there in granite? Why had the granite passed into the man? Which was humanity, which was stone?

A world of thought took possession of our brains. As our guide had anticipated, we passed on quickly in silence. When we met he must have seen that we were filled with horror and astonishment, but he did not confront us with the truth of his predictions; he only said—

"You have seen him?"

"What is the man?" said I.

"The people call him 'The man under a vow.'"

You can imagine the movement with which our heads turned toward the fisherman at these words! He was a simple man; he understood our mute interrogation, and this is what he told us. I try to preserve his own words and the popular character of the story.

"Madame, people at Le Croisic, and Batz too, believe that this man has been guilty of some crime and is performing the penance given him by a well-known rector whom he went to confess to beyond Nantes. Others believe that Cambremer—that is his name—is under a spell, and that he communicates it to any one who passes him to leeward. For this reason many people look to see in what quarter the wind is before they will pass the rock. If there's a gale," and he pointed to the northwest, "they would not go on, not if they were going to fetch a bit of the true cross; they are afraid and turn back. Others, the rich people at Le Croisic, say that Cambremer has made a vow, so he is called 'The man under a vow.' There he is night and day; he never goes. This talk has a smack of truth. Look," said he, turning round to point us out a thing we had not noticed before, "there, on the left, he has set up a wooden cross, to show that he is under the protection of God and the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. He would not be let alone as he is, if it were not that the terror he causes every one makes him as safe as if he were guarded by a regiment of soldiers.

"He has not spoken a word since he shut himself up, as it were, out there in the open. He lives upon bread and water which his brother's child, a little wench of twelve years old, takes him every morning. He has made a will and left her all his goods—a pretty creature she is too, a little slip of a maid, as gentle as a lamb, and as pretty spoken as could be. Her eyes are as blue—and as long as that," said he, holding up his thumb, "and her hair is like a cherub's. If you ask her, 'Tell me, Pérotte' (that's what we call Pierrette; she is dedicated to Saint Pierre. Cambremer's name is Pierre; he is her godfather)—'Tell me, Pérotte,' he went on, 'what does uncle say to thee?' she'll answer, 'He says nothing to me, never—nothing at all.' 'Well, and what does he do?' 'He kisses me on the forehead, on Sundays.' 'Thou'rt not afraid, then?' 'Why!' she says, 'he is my godfather! He won't let any one else take him his food but me.'

"Pérotte declares that he smiles when she comes, but you might as well talk of a sunbeam in a sea-fog, for it's said he's as gloomy as storm."

"But," said I, "you are exciting our curiosity, not satisfying it. Do you know what it was that brought him to this? Was it grief? or repentance? or madness? or crime? is he—?"

"Ah, monsieur, scarcely any one but I and my father know the truth about it. My mother, who is now dead, was servant

to the justice to whom Cambremer told the whole story. The people at the port say that the priest to whom he made his confession only gave him absolution on that condition. My poor mother overheard Cambremer without intending to, because the justice's parlor was next the kitchen. She heard it, and she is dead; and the judge who heard it, he too is dead. My mother made us promise—father and me—never to speak of it to the people about here: but I can tell you this: the evening my mother told us the story the hairs of my head stood on end."

"Well, tell us the story, my good fellow; we will not mention it to any one."

The fisherman looked at us and continued thus: "Pierre Cambremer, whom you saw there, is the eldest of the Cambremers. They have all been seafarers, fathers and sons, for generations. As their name shows, the sea has always given way to *them*. The one you have seen was a fisherman, with craft of his own; he had boats in which he used to go sardine fishing, and he even fished for deep sea fish for the dealers. He would have fitted out a ship and fished for cod, if he had not loved his wife so much. She was a beautiful woman, a Brouin from Guérande—splendid she was—and a kind heart too. She was so fond of her husband that she could never bear him to leave her longer than was necessary for the sardine fishing. Stop! They lived down there—there," said the fisherman, going up on a mound, in order to point out an island in a sort of little mediterranean between the dunes on which we were walking and the salt marshes of Guérande. "Do you see that house? That was his house. Jacquette Brouin and Cambremer had only one child, a boy, whom they loved—how much shall I say?—like an only child; they were quite mad about him. How often we used to see them at the fair buying him all the finest toys! It was a folly, every one told them so. Little Cambremer soon saw he could do anything he liked, and grew up as vicious as a red ass. If any one came to his father and said, 'Your son has almost killed little So-and-so!' he'd only laugh and say, 'Bah, he'll make a fine sailor! he'll command the king's fleet one day.' Or another would say, 'Pierre Cambremer, do you know that your lad has put out Pougaud's little girl's eye?' 'There'll be a lad for the girls!' said Pierre. Nothing was wrong with him. Then at ten years old the young whelp would fight every one he met; he'd wring the fowls' necks and kill the pigs for sport. I'll swear he wallowed in blood like a pole-cat! 'He'll make a splendid soldier,' said Cambremer; 'he has got a taste for blood.'

"You see, I remembered all this afterward," said the fisherman. "And so did Cambremer," he added after a pause.

"By the time Jacques Cambremer was fifteen or sixteen he was—well! a perfect shark. He used to go and play the fool and kick up his heels at Guérande and Savenay. Next he wanted coin; so he set to robbing his mother, and she didn't dare to say a word of it to her husband. Cambremer was an honest man; if a man had given him two sous too much on a bill, he would go twenty leagues to return them.

"At last, one day his mother was plundered of everything while his father was away fishing; their son carried off the dresser, the crockery, the sheets, the linen; he left nothing but the four walls. He sold the whole of it to go on the spree with to Nantes. The poor woman cried over it for days and nights. His father would have to be told when he came back, and she was afraid of his father—not for herself—you may be sure! When Pierre Cambremer came back and saw his house furnished with things lent to his wife, he said, 'What in the world is all this?' His poor wife was more dead than alive. At last she said, 'We have been robbed.' 'And where's Jacques?' 'Jacques is away on the spree.' No one knew where the good-for-nothing fellow had gone. 'He's too fond of his larks,' said Pierre.

"Six months afterward the poor father heard that his son was going to be taken before the justice at Nantes. He journeyed there on foot (it's quicker than by sea), laid hands on his son, and brought

him back. He didn't ask him, 'What have you been doing?' He only said, 'If thou dost not stay here for two years with thy mother and me, and keep straight, and go fishing and live like an honest man, thou'lt have *me* to deal with.' The mad fellow, counting on his parent's folly, made an ugly face at his father. Thereupon Pierre gave him a cuff on the side of his head that laid up Master Jacques for six months. Meanwhile the poor mother was pining away with grief.

"One night she was sleeping peacefully beside her husband when she heard a noise; she raised herself in bed, and got a blow from a knife in her arm. She cried out; they brought a light, and Pierre Cambremer saw that his wife was wounded. He believed it to be the blow of a robber—as if there were any robbers in our parts! Why, you might carry ten thousand francs in gold from Le Croisic to Saint-Nazare under your arm, and no fear of any one even asking you what you had there. Pierre went to look for Jacques, but couldn't find him anywhere. The next morning the villain actually had the face to come back and say that he had been at Batz. I ought to tell you that his mother did not know where to hide her money; Cambremer placed his with Monsieur Dupolet at Croisic. Their son's pranks had cost them pounds upon pounds; they were half ruined; it was a hard thing for people who had about twelve thousand livres altogether, counting their little island. No one knows how much Cambremer had to give at Nantes to get his son off. The whole family was in bad luck. Cambremer's brother had met with misfortunes and wanted help. To console him Pierre told him that Jacques should marry Pérotte (the younger Cambremer's child). Then, to help him to gain a living he employed him at his fishing, for Joseph Cambremer was reduced to work for his bread. His wife had died of fever, so he had to pay for the months of Pérotte's weaning. Pierre Cambremer's wife too owed as much as a hundred francs to different people, for the little one, for linen and clothes, and for two or three months' wages to big Frelu, who nursed Pérotte. Well, Cambremer's wife had sewn a Spanish coin into the wool of her mattress, with 'For Pérotte' written on it. She had had a fine education, and could write like a clerk; she had taught her son to read; it was *that* was the ruin of him. No one knows how it was, but that good-for-nothing Jacques had sniffed gold; he had taken it and gone to run riot at Le Croisic. The good man Cambremer—as ill-luck would have it—came home with his boat, and as he was landing he saw a bit of paper floating on the water; he picked it up and took it to his wife; she recognized the words in her own writing, and fell down on the floor. Cambremer said nothing, went to Le Croisic, and heard there that his son was playing billiards; then he asked to see the woman that kept the café, and said to her, 'Jacques will pay you with a certain gold piece which I told him not to pay away; if you will return it to me I will wait at the door and give you silver for it instead.' The good woman brought him the coin. Cambremer took it. 'Good,' said he, and returned home. The whole town knew that much. But this is what *I* know, and the rest can only just guess at. He told his wife to set their downstair room in order; he made a fire in the grate, lighted two dips, and set two chairs on one side of the hearth and a stool on the other. Then he told his wife to lay out his wedding clothes, and bade her rig herself out in hers. He put on his clothes, and when he was dressed he went for his brother and told him to keep watch outside the house, and warn him if he heard any sound on either of the two beaches—this one and the one by the marsh de Guérande. When he thought his wife had dressed herself, he went in again, loaded his gun, and hid it in the chimney-corner. Presently Jacques came home; he was late; he had been drinking and gambling till ten o'clock; he had got brought across at Carnouf Point. His uncle heard him shouting on the beach by the marshes and went to fetch him, and brought him over without saying anything. When he came in, his father points to the stool and says, 'Sit down

there. Thou art before thy father and mother whom thou hast offended; they must be thy judges.' Jacques began to howl, because Cambremer's face had a strange set look. His mother sat as stiff as an oar. 'If thou dost cry or budge an inch, if thou dost not sit there as straight as a mast on thy stool,' said Pierre, taking aim at his son with his gun, 'I'll kill thee like a dog.' The son became as dumb as a fish; the mother said no word. 'Look here,' said Pierre to his son; 'here is a piece of paper which has been used to wrap up a Spanish gold piece in; the gold piece was in thy mother's bed; thy mother was the only person who knew where she had put it; I found the paper floating on the water when I landed; thou hast just given—this very evening—this Spanish gold piece to la mère Fleurant, and thy mother cannot find her piece in the bed. Explain.' Jacques said that he had not taken his mother's piece, and that his piece he had by him, left over from Nantes. 'So much the better,' said Pierre. 'How canst thou prove that to us?' 'I had it.' 'Thou didst not take thy mother's?' 'No.' 'Canst thou swear it on thy eternal salvation?' He was going to swear; his mother raised her eyes and looked at him and said, 'Jacques, my child, take care; do not swear what is not true; thou canst amend, and repent; there is still time.' She wept. 'You're a nice one,' said he; 'you have always tried to get me into scrapes.' Cambremer turned pale. 'What thou hast just said to thy mother will make thy account all the heavier. Let's come to the point! Art going to swear?' 'Yes.' 'Wait a minute,' said he. 'Had thy coin got this cross on it that the sardine merchant put on ours when he gave it us?' Jacques was getting sober; he began to cry.—'We've talked enough,' said Pierre; 'I am not going to say anything about what thou hast done before, but I don't choose that a Cambremer should die in the market-place at Le Croisic. Say thy prayers, and let's make haste. There's a priest coming in a minute to hear thy confession.' His mother had gone out; she could not stay to hear her son condemned. When she was gone, Cambremer, the uncle, came with the rector of Piriac; but Jacques would have nothing to say to him. He was a cunning one; he knew his father well enough to be sure he would not kill him without confession. 'Thank you, monsieur,' said Cambremer, seeing that Jacques was obstinate, 'please to excuse us, but I wanted to give my son a lesson; I beg you not to say anything about it. As to thee,' he said to Jacques, 'if thou dost not mind—the first time it'll be for good and all. I shall put an end to it without confession.' He sent him to bed. The lad believed this, and imagined that he would be able to set himself to rights with his father. He slept; the father watched. When he saw that his son was in a deep sleep, he covered his mouth with tow, bound it round tightly with a piece of a sail, and then tied his hands and feet. He raved, 'he wept blood,' as Cambremer told the justice. You may imagine, his mother threw herself at his father's feet. 'He is judged,' said he; 'thou must help me to put him into the boat.' She refused. Cambremer put him in by himself, forced him down into the bottom of the boat, and tied a stone to his neck. Then he rowed out of the cove—out to the open sea till he was as far out as the rock where he now sits. By that time the poor mother had got her brother-in-law to take her out there. She cried out as loud as she could 'Mercy,' but it was only like throwing a stone at a wolf. It was moonlight; she saw the father throw their son, to whom her bowels still yearned, into the sea; and as there was no wind she heard Plsh! then nothing, not a trace, not a bubble. No, the sea doesn't tell secrets. Cambremer landed to quiet his wife's groans, and found her half dead. It was impossible for the two brothers to carry her; they were obliged to put her in the boat which had just been used for her son, and rowed her round by the Le Croisic channel. Ah, well! *la belle Brouin*, as she was called, did not last a week; she died entreating her husband to burn the cursed boat. Oh! he did it too. As for him, it was all up with him; he

didn't know what he wanted. When he walked, he staggered like a man who couldn't stand wine. Then he took a ten days' journey, and when he came back, sat down where you have seen him, and since he has been there he hasn't spoken a word."

. . . .

The fisherman did not take more than a minute or two to tell us this story, and told it even more simply than I have written it. The people make few reflections when they tell a tale; they relate the fact that has impressed them, and only translate it into words as they feel it. This narative was as keen and incisive as the blow of a hatchet.

We returned to Le Croisic by the salt marshes. Our fisherman, become as silent as ourselves, led us through the bewildering paths. Our souls had undergone a change. We were both plunged in gloomy thoughts, saddened by this drama which explained the sudden presentiment we had felt at the sight of Cambremer. We both knew enough of the world to divine that part of those three lives concerning which our guide had been silent.

The miseries of the three rose up before us as plainly as if we had seen them in the scenes of a drama that reached its climax in the father's expiation of his necessary crime. We dared not look at the rock where the unhappy man sat, a terror to the whole country. Clouds began to darken the sky, and a mist rose on the horizon while we walked through the most gloomy and melancholy scenery I ever beheld. We trod on soil that seemed sick and unwholesome, the salt marshes, that may well be called the scrofulous places of the earth. The ground is divided into unequal squares, each incased in a deep cutting of gray earth, and each full of brackish water, on the surface of which the salt collects. These artificial pits are divided within by borders, whereon the workmen walk armed with long rakes. By the aid of these rakes they skim off the brine and carry it to round platforms contrived at certain distances, when it is ready to be formed into heaps. For two hours we walked by the side of this gloomy chess-board, where the abundance of salt chokes all vegetation, and where no one is to be seen, except here and there a few *paludiers*—the name given to the cultivators of the salt. These men, or rather this class of Bretons, wear a special dress, a white jacket, not unlike a brewer's. They marry only among themselves; there is no instance of a girl of this tribe having married any other man than a *paludier*. The horrible appearance of these swamps, with the mud thus raked in regular patches, and the gray earth shunned by every Breton flower, was in harmony with the pall that had been cast upon our souls. When we reached the place where one has to cross the arm of the sea formed by the irruption of its waters into this basin and no doubt serving to replenish the salt marshes, the sight of even such meager vegetation as adorns the sands on the beach was a delight to us. As we were crossing, we could see in the middle of the lake the island on which the Cambremers had lived. We turned away our heads.

On arriving at our hotel we noticed a billiard table in one of the ground-floor rooms, and when we learned that it was the only public billiard table in Le Croisic, we made our preparations for leaving during the night. The next day we were at Guérande.

VIII.

MODESTE MIGNON.

I.

In the beginning of the month of October, 1829, Monsieur Simon Babylas Latournelle, notary, was going along the road from Havre to Ingouville, arm in arm with his son; his wife was also with him, and was followed, as by a page, by the head clerk, a little dwarf named Jean Butscha. When the four, of whom two at least passed over the same road every evening, reached a place where the road turned upon itself, in a fashion that the Italians call *cornice*, the notary looked carefully around him, on both sides, before and behind, to see whether any one could hear him, and then cautiously lowered his voice.

"Exupère," he said to his son, "I want you to try and execute carefully and intelligently a little maneuver which I am about to explain to you, without trying to understand what it means; but if you happen to guess anything, throw the knowledge into that Styx which should be the receptacle of all secrets belonging to another, in the mind of every notary and every man who is destined for the magistracy. After having presented your respects and duty to Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, to Monsieur and Madame Dumay, and to Monsieur Gobenheim if he is at the Chalet, Monsieur Dumay will take you aside into a corner as soon as he has an opportunity. You may gaze at Mademoiselle Mignon all the time he is talking to you, if you like. (I will permit it.) My worthy friend will ask you to go and take a walk. Come back again at nine o'clock, as if you were in haste. When you return from the walk you must try to imitate the panting of a man who is out of breath, and you must go and whisper to him, quite low, but in such a way that Mademoiselle Modeste can hear you:—"The young man is coming!"

Exupère was to start for Paris the next morning, to begin his law studies. This approaching departure had decided Latournelle to propose his son to his friend Dumay as an accomplice in the conspiracy of which this order gives a glimpse.

"Is Mademoiselle Modeste suspected of carrying on an intrigue?" asked Butscha, timidly.

"Hush! Butscha," said Madame Latournelle, taking her husband's arm.

Madame Latournelle, the daughter of a clerk of one of the lower courts, deemed herself sufficiently authorized by her birth to call herself a descendant of a parliamentary family. This explains why the woman, already too blotched and pimpled, attempted to give herself the majesty of the tribunal whose judgments were recorded by her father. She took snuff, held herself as straight as a stick, posed as a distinguished person, and was like a mummy who has been momentarily restored to activity by the use of galvanism.

She attempted to give aristocratic tones to her sharp voice, but she scarcely succeeded in concealing her own want of education. Her utility as a member of society was demonstrated by the flower-laden bonnets and frizzled curls which she wore, and the dresses which she chose. How would merchants dispose of these productions if there were no Madame Latournelles? All the foibles of this worthy woman, who was really charitable and pious, might have passed unnoticed if it

had not been for the fact that Nature, which sometimes pleases itself by grotesque creations, had endowed her with the height of a drum-major, in order to make her oddities conspicuous.

She had never been away from Havre; she believed in the infallibility of the place; she bought everything there, even to her dresses. She called herself a Normande to the ends of her fingers, and she venerated her father and adored her husband. The little Latournelle had had the temerity to marry her after she had reached the age of thirty-three, and they had had one son. As Latournelle might have obtained almost anywhere the sixty thousand francs of dowry which had been given by the registry clerk, his remarkable intrepidity was attributed to a desire to escape the invasion of the Minotaur, which he could have scarcely eluded by himself, if he had had the imprudence to marry a young and pretty girl. The notary had good-naturedly recognized the good qualities of Mademoiselle Agnes (she was named Agnes), and had reflected how soon a woman's beauty passes in the eyes of her husband.

As for the insignificant young man upon whom the registry clerk had bestowed his Norman name at baptism, Madame Latournelle still felt such astonishment at having given birth to a son at the age of thirty-five years and seven months, that she would have given him the milk from her own breast even now, if he had wanted it; this hyperbole is the only one which can express her maternal foolishness. "How beautiful my son is," she would say to her little friend Modeste, pointing him out when they were on the way to mass, while Exupère walked before them. "He resembles you," Modeste Mignon would reply, in exactly the same way in which she would have said: "What dreadful weather!"

The portrait of this person will be necessary before long, since Madame Latournelle had been for three years the chaperon of the young girl for whose feet the notary and Dumay his friend were about to spread one of those snares called, in the "Physiology of Marriage," *mouse-traps*.

As for Latournelle, he was a good little man, as cunning as the purest honesty would permit; strangers always took him for a knave when they saw the strange physiognomy to which all Havre was by this time accustomed. Some trouble with his sight compelled the worthy notary to wear green spectacles to help his eyes, which were always red. Each arch of his eyebrows, which were thinly covered with down, extended from the brown frame of the glass, thus making a double circle. If one has never observed upon the face of some passer-by the effect produced by these two parallel circumferences, separated by an empty space, one cannot easily imagine what a puzzle such a face is; particularly when it is pale and hollowed, and ends in a point like that of Mephistopheles; a type which painters have copied on the masks of cats. For that is what Babylas Latournelle resembled.

Above these atrocious green spectacles rose a bald crown, all the more artful in appearance since the wig, apparently endowed with motion, was indiscreet enough to permit white hairs to escape on all sides, as it rested unevenly upon the forehead. Knowing this estimable Norman, dressed in black, and mounted upon his two legs like a beetle upon two pins, to be one of the most honest men in the world, it was difficult to discover the reason for these contradictions in physiognomy.

Jean Butscha, a poor natural son who had been deserted, and who had been taken and cared for by the registry clerk Labrosse and his daughter, had become a head clerk by dint of industry; he lived with his patron, who gave him a salary of nine hundred francs; he had lost all semblance of youth; he was a dwarf—and he made an idol of Modeste; he would have given his life for her. This poor being, whose round eyes were pressed between thick eyelids, who was pock-marked, burdened with a shock of crisp, curly hair, and embarrassed by his enormous hands, had met no looks save those of pity from

the time he was a child; and this fact is sufficient to explain his whole character. He was silent, reserved, exemplary in conduct, and religious. He was a traveler in that immense extent of country called, upon the map of Tenderness, "Love without hope"; and he wandered upon the arid and sublime heights of Desire.

Modeste had dubbed the grotesque clerk the "Mysterious Dwarf." This sobriquet caused Butscha to read Walter Scott's romance, and made him say to Modeste one day: "Will you accept, against an evil day, a rose from your mysterious dwarf?" But Modeste suddenly flung the soul of her adorer back into its dwelling of mud by one of those terrible glances which young girls know how to bestow upon those who do not please them. Butscha himself had but a lowly opinion of his own merits; and he, as well as his mistress, had never been out of Havre.

It may be as well, in the interest of those who are not acquainted with Havre, to say a few words relating to the destination of the Latournelle family, of which the head clerk was evidently a member. Ingouville is to Havre what Montmartre is to Paris, a high hill, at the foot of which the city is spread out; with this difference, that the sea and the Seine surround it; that it is hopelessly inclosed by fortifications, and that the mouth of the river, the port and the harbor present a very different sight from the fifty thousand houses of Paris. At the foot of Montmartre an ocean of slate roofs lies in motionless blue waves; at Ingouville, the sea is like moving roofs, swayed by the winds.

This line of hills, which, from Rouen to the sea, borders the river, leaving a more or less restricted margin between itself and the water, contains numberless picturesque treasures in its towns, its ravines, its valleys and its prairies; it has been of immense value to Ingouville since 1816, at which time the prosperity of Havre began. The place became the Auteuil, the Ville d'Avray, the Montmorency of merchants, who built themselves villas on the terraces of the vast amphitheater, where they could breathe the sea air, perfumed with the flowers of their magnificent gardens. These bold speculators rested there from the fatigues of their counters, and from the close atmosphere of the houses in which they had been living, built close against each other, without space, sometimes even without a courtyard, as the increasing population of Havre, the inflexible line of its ramparts and the growth of the harbor made it necessary for them to be built. They left sadness at Havre, and found joy at Ingouville.

The law of social development gave a mushroom growth to the faubourg of Graville, which is to-day larger than Havre itself, and which winds down the hill like a serpent. At its crest, Ingouville has only one street, and the houses which overlook the Seine necessarily have an immense advantage over those on the other side of the way, whose view is masked by them, but which stand on tip-toe, like spectators at the play, in order to see over the heads of those in front. Nevertheless, there exist there, as everywhere, gradations of rank. A few houses on the summit have a superior position, or possess a right of view which forces their neighbor to keep his building down to a required height. Then again, the irregular line of rock is cut by the roads which make the amphitheater habitable; and through these vistas some of the dwellings have a view of the town, the river, or the sea.

Although the hill does not end in a perpendicular descent, it terminates in a sufficiently abrupt cliff. At the end of the road which winds along the summit there are ravines in which may be seen a few villages, Sainte-Adresse and two or three Saints something or other, and some creeks where the ocean ebbs and flows. This end of Ingouville, which is almost deserted, forms a striking contrast with the beautiful villas which look out over the valley of the Seine. Do the merchants fear the effects of the wind upon vegetation? or do they draw back before the expense of reclaiming these steeps? Whatever may be the reason, the tourist is surprised to see a bare and ravine-cut

coast at the west of Ingouville, like a beggar in rags beside a richly dressed, perfumed beauty.

In 1829, one of the last houses on the side of the sea, which is doubtless in the center of the Ingouville of to-day, was, and perhaps is still, called "the Chalet." This was originally a house devoted to a concierge, with his little garden before it. The proprietor of the villa to which it belonged, a house with a park, gardens, an aviary, hot-houses and lawns, fancied the idea of altering this little house to make it in harmony with his own dwelling, and rebuilt it on the model of a cottage. He separated this cottage from his own lawn, with its flowers, its garden-borders and terraces, by a low wall, along which he planted a hedge to conceal it.

Behind this cottage, which was, in spite of all his efforts, named the Chalet, there were kitchen-gardens and orchards. This Chalet, without its cows or dairy, was separated from the road by a fence whose palings were concealed by a luxuriant hedge. On the other side of the road the opposite house had a similar fence and hedge, which gave the Chalet a view of Havre.

This little house was the despair of Monsieur Vilquin, the proprietor of the villa. The creator of this country-seat, which breathed so plainly of the wealth of its owner, had extended his domains inland in order, as he himself said, to avoid having his gardeners in his pockets. When the Chalet was finished, it was fit only for the habitation of a friend. Monsieur Mignon, the former proprietor, was very fond of his cashier, and it will be seen that his affection was reciprocated; Monsieur Mignon therefore offered him the dwelling. Believing in doing things according to form, Dumay insisted upon having a lease for a dozen years, at a rent of three hundred francs, and Monsieur Mignon signed it willingly, saying:

"My dear Dumay, you must not forget that you have now promised to live in my house for twelve years."

By reason of certain events which will be duly related, the property of Monsieur Mignon, who was at one time the richest merchant in Havre, was sold to Vilquin, one of his opponents in business. In his delight at gaining possession of the celebrated villa Mignon, the new proprietor forgot to ask for a cancellation of the lease. Dumay, rather than hinder the sale, would have signed anything that Vilquin had chosen to exact; but when the deeds were once passed, he clung to his lease as to a vengeance. He remained therefore in Vilquin's pocket, as it were, in the heart of his family, observing him, annoying him, irritating him like a gadfly. Every morning when he looked out of his window, Vilquin experienced a feeling of annoyance as he saw this little bijou of a dwelling, this Chalet which had cost sixty thousand francs, and which sparkled like a ruby in the sunshine.

The comparison is not inapt, for the architect had built the little house of the reddest of red bricks, marked off with white. The window-frames were a bright green, and the woodwork was of yellowish brown. The roof projected several feet. A pretty little detached gallery ran along the first floor, and a veranda with glass sides projected from the middle of the façade. The ground-floor contained a pretty salon, which was separated from the dining-room by the landing of a wooden staircase whose design and ornaments were of elegant simplicity. The kitchen was behind the dining-room, and there was a room back of the salon which was used as a bedroom by Monsieur and Madame Dumay. On the first floor the architect had arranged two large sleeping rooms, with a dressing-room attached to each, to which the veranda served as a salon. Above these, and under the eaves, which were like two cards tilted against each other, were two rooms in the mansard for servants, each lighted by a round window, and sufficiently spacious.

Vilquin had had the pettiness to build a wall between the cottage and the kitchen-gardens; and since that had been done, the small amount of land which was secured to the Chalet by the lease resembled a Paris garden. The outbuildings, which had been erected and

painted to correspond with the Chalet, stood with their backs to the wall.

The interior of this charming dwelling was in harmony with its exterior. The salon, inlaid with hard wood, seemed to wondering eyes like a painting in imitation of Chinese lacker-ware. On black backgrounds framed in gold shone the many-colored birds, the impossible green foliage and the fantastic designs of the Chinese. The little dining-room was entirely in Northern wood, cut and carved like the beautiful chalets of Russia. The little anteroom, formed by the landing and well of the staircase, was painted to represent old wood, in Gothic ornaments. The bedrooms, with their chintz hangings, were delightful in their simple richness. The room where the cashier and his wife slept was sheathed in wood, and paneled like the cabin of a steamboat. These furnishings explained Vilquin's wrath. He would have liked to put his daughter and her husband in the cottage. This desire became known to Dumay, and will serve to explain later his Breton obstinacy.

The entrance to the Chalet was through a little iron latticed gate, whose spear-heads rose for a few inches above the fence and the hedge. The little garden, about equal in length to the lawn, was then full of flowers, roses, dahlias, the most beautiful and the rarest productions of the hot-house; for it was another of Vilquin's grievances that the elegant, fanciful little hot-house belonged to the Chalet, and separated, or, if you will, united, the villa Vilquin to the cottage. Dumay found his relaxation from the fatigues of business in caring for this hot-house, and Modeste found one of her great pleasures among its exotic treasures. The billiard-room of the villa Vilquin, which was a sort of gallery, formerly communicated with this hot-house through an immense aviary in the form of a turret; but after the construction of the wall which shut him off from a view of the gardens, Dumay walled up the door of communication. "Wall for wall," he said.

In 1827 Vilquin offered Dumay a salary of six thousand francs, and an indemnity of ten thousand more if he would relinquish the lease. The cashier refused, although Gobenheim, a former clerk of his master's, only gave him three thousand. Dumay was a Breton who had been transplanted by destiny into Normandy. Imagine, therefore, the hatred which the Norman Vilquin, a man worth three millions, felt for the tenants of the Chalet! Fancy what a crime it was to demonstrate to the rich man the impotence of his wealth! Vilquin, whose despair was the talk of Havre, had just proposed to make Dumay a present of a beautiful dwelling, and this offer had been also refused. Havre began to grow uneasy at this obstinacy, which it explained by saying: "Dumay is a Breton."

As for the cashier, he had an idea that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon would not be fittingly lodged anywhere else. His two idols now inhabited a temple which was worthy of them, and they had the advantage of dwelling in a sumptuous hut where dethroned kings might have preserved the majesty of circumstance around them, a species of dignity which is usually denied to those who have fallen from better days. Perhaps as the story goes on, the reader will not regret having known in advance something about the home and the companions of Modeste; for at her age, people and things have as much influence over the future as character; and indeed, the character often receives ineffaceable impressions from them.

II.

By the way in which the Latournelles entered the Chalet, a stranger might have known that they came there every evening.

"Ah! are you here already?" said the notary, as he saw in the salon a young banker of Havre, Gobenheim, a relative of Gobenheim Keller, the chief of the great Paris house.

This young man had a pale face; he was one of those blondes with black eyes

whose motionless gaze has something fascinating about it; he was temperate both in his speech and in his life; he was dressed in black, and was as thin as a consumptive, although vigorously framed. He cultivated the family of his former master and the house of his cashier less through affection than self-interest. They played whist there at two sous the point; he was not obliged to wear a dress-coat; he accepted nothing but glasses of *eau sucree*, and therefore was not obliged to return any civilities. This apparent devotion to the Mignons gave the impression that Gobenheim had a heart, and released him from the necessity of going into the fashionable world of Havre, where he would meet with useless expenses, which would disarrange his domestic life.

This disciple of the golden calf went to bed every evening at half-past ten, and rose at five o'clock in the morning. And furthermore, as he could rely upon the discretion of Latournelle and Butscha, Gobenheim could propound knotty problems to them, receive gratuitous advice from the notary, and get a just idea of the value of the gossip of the street. This gold-catcher, as Butscha called him, belonged to that class of substances which chemistry terms absorbents. Since the catastrophe to the house of Mignon, where the Kellers had placed him to learn the principles of maritime commerce, no one at the Chalet had ever asked him to do even the most trivial thing; his reply was well known. The fellow looked at Modeste as he would have examined a two-sous lithograph. Butscha, whose wit was sometimes shown by clever little sayings timidly uttered, once remarked of him: "He is one of the pistons of the immense machine called Commerce."

The four Latournelles saluted with the greatest respect an old lady dressed in black velvet, who did not rise from the armchair where she was seated, for both her eyes were covered with the yellow film produced by cataract. Madame Mignon may be briefly described. She attracted instant attention by her face, for she was one of those mothers whose blameless lives defy the strokes of destiny, but who have served as a target for its arrows, and are members of the unnumbered tribe of Niobes. Her well-curled, well-cared-for blonde wig suited her white face, which was as cold as those of the wives of burgomasters, painted by Hals or Mirevelt. Her careful toilet, her velvet boots, her lace collar and her carefully arranged shawl, all bore witness of Modeste's solicitude for her mother.

When silence was once more restored in the pretty salon, Modeste, seated near her mother, and embroidering a fichu for her, became for a moment the center of observation. This curiosity, hidden beneath the ordinary salutations and inquiries common between people who have just met, even though they see each other every day, might have betrayed the domestic plot against the young girl, even to an indifferent eye; but Gobenheim, who was more than indifferent, noticed nothing, and proceeded to light the candles upon the card table. Dumay's attitude made the situation a terrible one for Butscha, the Latournelles, and particularly Madame Dumay, who knew her husband to be capable of firing upon Modeste's lover, even as he would upon a mad dog. After dinner the cashier had gone to walk, followed by two magnificent Pyrenees dogs, whom he suspected of treachery, and whom he had left with a former tenant of Monsieur Mignon's. Then, a few moments before the entrance of the Latournelles, he had taken his pistols from the head of his bed and placed them on the chimney-piece, without attracting Modeste's attention. The young girl did not take the least notice of these preparations, singular though they were.

Although he was short, thick-set and pock-marked, with a way of speaking in a low tone, as if he were listening to himself, this Breton, a former lieutenant of the Guard, had so much resolution and coolness plainly graven upon his face that no one had ventured to take a liberty with him during the twenty years that he was in the army. His small,

calm blue eyes were like two pieces of steel. His ways, his look, his speech, his manner, were all in keeping with his short name of Dumay. His physical strength, which was well-known to every one, put him beyond all danger of attack. He was able to kill a man with one blow of his fist, and had performed that feat at Bautzen, where he had found himself, unarmed, face to face with a Saxon, behind his company.

At the present moment, the firm yet gentle expression of the man's face had reached a kind of tragic sublimity; his lips were as pale as his face, indicating a tumult within him, which was mastered by his Breton will; a perspiration, slight but perceptible, which every one saw and guessed to be cold, moistened his brow. The notary knew that a drama before the criminal courts might result from these indications. In fact, the cashier was playing a part, in connection with Modeste Mignon, which involved sentiments of honor and loyalty of far greater importance than mere social laws; proceeding from one of those compacts which, in case disaster came of it, could be judged only in a higher court than one of earth. The majority of dramas lie really in the ideas which we form of things. Events which seem to us dramatic are only the subjects which our souls convert into tragedy or comedy according to our characters.

Madame Latournelle and Madame Dumay, who were detailed to watch Modeste, had a certain unnaturalness of demeanor and a quiver in their voices which the girl did not notice, so absorbed was she in her embroidery. Modeste placed each thread of cotton with a precision that would have driven an ordinary embroideress to despair. Her face expressed the pleasure which the smooth petals of a completed flower caused her. The dwarf, seated between his mistress and Gobenheim, restrained his emotion as he asked himself how he could get at Modeste, in order to whisper a word of warning to her.

In taking her place in front of Madame Mignon, Madame Latournelle had, with the diabolical intelligence of a devotee to duty, isolated Modeste. Madame Mignon, who was naturally silent on account of her blindness, showed by her unusual pallor that she understood the proof which her daughter was about to experience. Perhaps she disapproved of the stratagem at the last moment, even while acknowledging its necessity. Hence her silence. She was inwardly mourning. Exupère, who was to spring the trap, was entirely ignorant of the piece in which chance had given him a part. Gobenheim, by reason of his character, showed an indifference equal to that of Modeste herself. For a spectator who knew what was going on behind the scenes, this contrast between the complete ignorance of some and the quivering expectation of others would have been sublime. In these days, more than ever before, do romance writers arrange effects like these, as they have a perfect right to do; for nature is always stronger than they. In this particular case, social nature, which is a nature within nature, was amusing itself by making truth more interesting than fiction; just as torrents describe fanciful curves which are forbidden to painters, and accomplish feats of strength by loosening or polishing stones in a manner to surprise sculptors and architects.

It was eight o'clock. At that season, twilight was just closing in. On this particular evening, the sky was cloudless, the warm air caressed the earth, the air was balmy with the breath of the flowers, and the creaking of the sand could be heard beneath the feet of some returning promenaders. The sea shone like a mirror. There was so little wind that the lighted candles upon the table burned quietly, although the windows were partly open. This salon, this evening, this abode, were a fitting frame for the portrait of the young girl, who was being as attentively observed by all these people as a painter would study the Margherita Doni, one of the glories of the Pitti Palace. Modeste, a flower inclosed like that of Catullus—was she worth all these precautions?

You have seen the cage; now behold the bird!

Twenty years of age, slender and deli-

cate as one of those sirens which are invented by English artists for their "Books of Beauty." Modeste, like her mother before her, was a coquettish embodiment of that grace which is so little understood in France, which is there called sentimentality, but which the Germans know to be that poetry of the heart which comes to the surface, manifesting itself by affectations if the owner is silly, but in divine beauties of manner if she be spirituelle. She was remarkable for her pale gold hair, and she belonged to that type of women who are called, probably in memory of Eve, celestial blondes, whose satin-like skin resembles silk paper over the flesh, who shiver at a cold look and blossom beneath a warm one, and who make the hand jealous of the eye.

Beneath her hair, which was soft and light as a feather, and curled in the English style, her forehead, which was perfect in shape and drawing, was full of thought and calm, although luminous with intelligence; but where could another be found so transparently pure? It seemed, like a pearl, to have an orient.

The eyes, which were gray-blue in color, were clear as those of a child, showing all the mischief and all the innocence of childhood, harmonizing with the arch of the eyebrows, which was faintly indicated by lines like those made with a pencil upon Chinese faces. This innocent candor was still further shown around the eyes and on the temples, by tints of mother-of-pearl, with blue veins, the privilege of these delicate complexions. The face of that oval so often chosen by Raphael for his Madonnas was distinguished by the quiet and sober tints of the cheeks, modest as a Bengal rose, upon which the long lashes of transparent eyelids cast shadows mingled with light. The neck, now bending over, was almost too delicate, of a milky whiteness, recalling those vanishing lines beloved of Leonardo da Vinci. A few slight blemishes, like the patches of the eighteenth century, betrayed the fact that Modeste was a child of earth, and not one of those creations dreamed of in Italy by the angelic school. Her lips, although at once delicate and full, were slightly mocking and somewhat voluptuous; her figure, supple without being fragile, had no fears for maternity like that of those young girls who seek beauty by the extreme pressure of a corset. Dimity and steel and lacings defined but did not manufacture the serpentine lines of her elegant figure, graceful as that of a young poplar swaying in the wind.

A dress of pearl gray, with cherry-colored trimmings, made with a long waist, modestly outlined the corsage and covered the shoulders, which were still rather thin, with a guimpe that showed only the first curves which joined the neck to the shoulders. At the sight of this ethereal and intelligent face, which was made more positive by the delicate lines of a Grecian nose with rose-colored nostrils; where the poetry of the almost mystical forehead was half contradicted by the voluptuous expression of the mouth; where candor disputed the profound and varied depths of the eye with a finished mockery, an observer would have thought that this young girl, with her alert and quick ear, which started at the least sound, and a nostril ready to catch the celestial perfumes of the ideal, was destined to be the theater of a combat between the poetry of the dawn and the labors of the day, between fancy and reality. Modeste was the curious, modest young girl, knowing her destiny, and full of chastity, the Virgin of Spain rather than that of Raphael.

She lifted her head as she heard Dumay say to Exupère:

"Come here, young man!"

As she watched them talking in a corner, she believed that it was a question of some errand to be done in Paris. She looked at the friends around her, as if astonished at their silence, and exclaimed in a perfectly natural manner:

"Well, are you not going to play?" at the same time pointing to the green table which the grand Madame Latournelle called the altar.

"Let us begin to play," said Dumay, who had just dismissed the young Exupère.

"You sit there, Butscha," said Madame Latournelle, separating the clerk by the length of the table from the group formed by Madame Mignon and her daughter.

"And you come here," said Dumay to his wife, placing her near himself.

Madame Dumay, a little American of thirty-six years old, furtively wiped away a few tears; she adored Modeste and feared a catastrophe.

"You are not very gay this evening," continued Modeste.

"We are going to play," returned Gobenheim, who was arranging his cards.

However interesting the situation may be, it will become still more so by explaining the position of Dumay relative to Modeste. If the brevity of this recital renders it dull, we crave pardon by reason of a desire to complete this scene promptly, and by the necessity of relating the argument by which all dramas are regulated.

III.

Anne Francois Bernard Dumay was born at Vannes. He enlisted as a soldier in 1799, in the army of Italy. His father was president of the revolutionary tribunal, and displayed so much energy that the place became too hot to hold the son after the father, who was a rascally avocat, died upon the scaffold after the 9th Thermidor. His mother died of grief, and then Anne sold everything that he possessed and hastened to Italy at the age of twenty-two, when the French army was beginning to give way.

In the department of Var he met a young man who was also in search of glory, believing a battlefield less perilous than his own Provence. Charles Mignon, the last of that noble family to whom Paris owes the street and the hotel built by Cardinal Mignon, had for a father a shrewd and cunning man who desired to save the estate of La Bastie, a pretty little feudal manor, from the claws of the Revolution. Like all the cowards of that epoch, the Count de la Bastie, who had become the Citizen Mignon, believed that it was safer to cut off other people's heads than to allow them to cut off his. The false terrorist disappeared at the time of the 9th Thermidor, and was put upon the list of emigrants. The estate of La Bastie was sold, and the turreted towers of the dishonored chateau were leveled with the ground. The Citizen Mignon was discovered at Orange and massacred with his wife and all his children except Charles Mignon, whom he had sent to seek an asylum for him in the Upper Alps.

Overcome by the frightful intelligence, Charles waited in a valley of Mont Ginevra until the times should become less perilous; he remained there until 1799, living upon the few louis which his father had put into his hand when he started. At last, when he was twenty-three years old, and without any other fortune than his fine appearance, that southern beauty which, when it is in perfection, reaches the sublime (whose type is Antinous, the illustrious favorite of Adrien), he resolved to hazard upon the red cloth of war his Provencal audacity, which he, like so many others, mistook for a vocation. When he was on his way to the headquarters of the army, which was then at Nice, he met the Breton.

The two men became comrades, both through the similarity of their destinies and the contrast in their characters. They drank out of the same cup, and ate from the same biscuit, and in the peace which followed the battle of Marengo they were both made sergeants. When the war began again, Charles Mignon succeeded in entering the cavalry, and lost sight of his comrade. In 1812 he was an officer of the Legion of Honor, and major of a cavalry regiment: he hoped to regain his title of Count de la Bastie, and to be made colonel by the emperor. He was, however, taken prisoner by the Russians, and sent, like so many others, to Siberia. His companion on the journey was a poor lieutenant in whom he recognized Anne Dumay. This man had no decorations, although he was a brave man; he was unfortunate, like so many others of the rank and file, the wool-epau-

leted ones, that canvas of men upon which Napoleon painted the empire. While they were in Siberia the lieutenant-colonel, in order to kill time, taught arithmetic and writing to the Breton, whose father had not thought it worth while to educate him. Charles found in his old comrade one of those rare hearts into which he could pour both his griefs and his joys.

The son of Provence finally met the fate which awaits all fine fellows. In 1804, at Frankfort-on-the-Main, he was beloved by Bettina Wallenrod, the only daughter of a banker, and he married her all the more willingly since she was rich and a beauty, while he himself was only a lieutenant, with no other fortune than the excessively problematical future of a soldier of that period. The father, a decayed baron (there is always a baron in a German bank), was charmed to learn that the handsome lieutenant represented in his own person the family of Mignons of La Bastie, and approved of the choice of the blonde Bettina, whom a painter (there was one in Frankfort then) had lately painted as an ideal of Germany. The banker forthwith named his future grandsons Counts of La Bastie Wallenrod, and placed a sufficient sum in the French funds to give his daughter an income of thirty thousand francs. This dowry made a very small hole in his capital, the value of money being then very low. The Empire, following the policy of many other debtors, rarely paid its dividends; Charles, therefore, felt rather uneasy at this investment, for he had not as much faith as the baron in the imperial eagles. Faith, and the admiration which is only an ephemeral belief, rarely survives when brought into close contact with its idol. The machine which is admired by the traveler is distrusted by the mechanic; and the stokers of the Napoleonic engine were the officers of the army—if, indeed, they were not its fuel.

The Baron Wallenrod Tustall Bartenstild promised to assist the young household, however. Charles loved Bettina as much as she loved him, and that is saying a good deal; but when a Provencal becomes enthusiastic, everything in him rises to the level of his exalted sentiments. But how could he help adoring that blonde loveliness, which looked as if it had escaped from one of Albert Durer's pictures, and which was furthermore joined to an angelic character and a fortune renowned in Frankfort?

At the period when he confided his sorrows to the Breton, Charles had had four children, of whom only two daughters were living. Dumay, without knowing them, loved these two little daughters out of sheer sympathy. The elder, named Bettina Caroline, was born in 1805; the other, Marie Modeste, in 1808. The unfortunate lieutenant-colonel, without any news of his loved ones, returned on foot, in 1814, across Russia and Prussia, accompanied by the lieutenant. The two friends, between whose hearts there existed no difference of rank, reached Frankfort just as Napoleon was landing at Cannes.

Charles found his wife in Frankfort, but she was in mourning; she had had the misfortune to lose her father, by whom she was adored, and who would have liked to see her always happy, even at his death-bed. He did not survive the disasters of the Empire. When he was seventy-two years old he speculated in cottons, believing in the genius of Napoleon, not knowing that genius is as often beyond events as at the bottom of them. The last of the Wallenrods had purchased almost as many bales of cotton as the emperor had lost men in the glorious campaign in France.

Glad to have saved his wife and daughters from the general shipwreck, Mignon went back to Paris, and was made by the emperor lieutenant-colonel in the cuirassiers of the Guard, and commander of the Legion of Honor. It was the dream of the colonel to become count and general after Napoleon's first victory, but the dream was overwhelmed by the waves of blood at Waterloo. The colonel, slightly wounded, retired to the Loire, and left Tours before the army disbanded.

In the spring of 1816, Charles Mignon

sold out of the funds, and realized nearly four hundred thousand francs, with which he resolved to go and seek his fortune in America, and leave the country where Napoleon's soldiers were already beginning to feel persecution. He was accompanied from Paris to Havre by Dumay, whose life he had saved, as often happened in the chances of war, by taking him up on his saddle in the rout after the battle of Waterloo. Dumay shared the opinions and the discouragement of the colonel; and the poor fellow idolized the two little girls, and followed Charles like a spaniel; and the latter, thinking that the habit of obedience, joined to the honesty and the faithful attachment of the lieutenant, would make him a faithful and useful servant, proposed to him to put himself under his orders in civil life.

Dumay was delighted to be adopted by a family with whom he expected to have the relations of the mistletoe to the oak.

While they were waiting for an opportunity to embark, choosing among the ships and debating the chances offered by their destinations, the colonel heard rumors of the brilliant destiny which was reserved for Havre after the peace. While listening to the talk of two citizens, he saw the means of fortune, and became at once a shipping-merchant, a banker, and a landed proprietor; he bought lands and houses for two hundred thousand francs, and sent to New York a vessel laden with French silks which he bought at Lyons for a low figure. Dumay was his agent, and went on the ship. While the colonel was installing himself and his family in the finest house on the Rue Royale, and learning the elements of banking with the activity and extraordinary intelligence of a native of Provence, Dumay was making two fortunes, for he returned with a consignment of cotton that he had bought at a ridiculously low price. This double operation was worth an enormous amount of money to the house of Mignon.

Then the colonel bought the villa at Ingouville, and rewarded Dumay by giving him a modest house on the Rue Royale. The subordinate had brought from New York, with his bales of cotton, a pretty little woman who was attracted by the Frenchman. Miss Grummer had about four thousand dollars, or twenty thousand francs, which Dumay placed with his colonel. Dumay, who had become the right hand of the shipping-merchant, soon learned to keep his books, a science which, according to himself, belongs to the sergeant-majors of commerce.

This open-hearted soldier, who had been neglected by fortune for twenty years, thought himself the luckiest man in the world when he became proprietor of a house which the generosity of his chief filled with pretty furniture, and which was supplemented by the twelve hundred francs of income which he had in the funds, and by his salary of thirty-six hundred francs. In his wildest dreams Lieutenant Dumay had never hoped for such happiness; but it was still more satisfaction to him to see himself the pivot upon which revolved the richest commercial house in Havre. Madame Dumay had the misfortune to lose all her children at birth, and she therefore attached herself to the two Mignon girls with as much love as Dumay himself, who would have preferred them to his own daughters if he had had any.

Every year Dumay placed two thousand francs or more in the house of Mignon. When the annual balance sheet was examined, the patron added something to the cashier's account with a gratification which corresponded with his services. In 1824, the cashier's credit amounted to fifty-eight thousand francs. It was then that Charles Mignon, count of La Bastie, although the title was never used, overwhelmed his cashier by lodging him in the Chalet, where Modeste and her mother were living quietly at the time this story opens.

The deplorable state of Madame Mignon, who had still been beautiful at the time of her husband's departure, was caused by the catastrophe to which Charles's absence was due. It had taken three years for grief to break down the gentle German woman; but it was a grief that gnawed at her heart like a worm at

the heart of fruit. The explanation is easily found. Two children, who had died in infancy, were mourned by a heart that could not forget. Her husband's exile to Siberia was to the loving wife a daily death. The misfortunes of the rich house of Wallenrod, and the death of the wealthy banker, a ruined man, at a time when she was uncertain as to her husband's fate, was a dreadful blow. The excessive joy which she felt at her husband's return nearly killed her. Then came the second fall of the Empire, and the proposed expatriation, which were like a relapse of the same fever to her. Finally, there came ten years of continued prosperity, the enjoyment of her house, the handsomest in Havre, the dinners, balls and fetes of the prosperous merchant, the elegances of the villa Mignon, and the great consideration and respectful esteem which her husband possessed; and all these things, together with the entire affection of her husband, who returned her unique love in kind, reconciled the poor woman to life. And then, just when she had least expected it, when she was looking forward to a peaceful evening after a stormy day, an unlooked-for catastrophe, which was buried in the heart of this double family, and to which we shall soon refer, had come as the forerunner of renewed trials.

In January, 1826, in the midst of a fete, when Charles Mignon was the choice of all Havre as its deputy, three letters, from New York, Paris and London, had shattered, like so many blows of a hammer, the glass of the palace of prosperity. In ten minutes ruin had swooped down with its vulture wings upon their great happiness, as the cold fell upon the great army in 1812. In a single night, which Dumay and Charles Mignon spent in going over the accounts, the latter took his resolve. The whole property, not excepting the furniture, would be sufficient to pay everything.

"Havre," said the colonel, "will never see me afoot. Dumay, I will take your sixty thousand francs at six per cent."

"Take it at three, colonel."

"At nothing, then," replied Mignon, peremptorily. "I will give you a share in my new undertakings. The *Modeste*, which is no longer mine, sails to-morrow; the captain will take me with him. I charge you with the care of my wife and daughter. I shall never write; no news is good news."

Dumay, who still preserved his military characteristics, did not ask his colonel a single question about his plans.

"I believe," he said to Latournelle, with a little knowing air, "that the colonel has his plans all made."

On the next day, at daybreak, he accompanied the colonel on board the ship *La Modeste*, bound for Constantinople. There, on the poop of the vessel, the Breton said to the Provencal:

"What are your final orders, colonel?"

"Let no man approach the Chalet," said the father, with difficulty restraining his emotion. "Dumay, guard my last child for me, as a bull-dog would guard it. Death to any one who would try to harm my second daughter! Nothing, not even the scaffold, would prevent me from joining you."

"Colonel, you may rest easy. I understand you. You will find Mademoiselle Modeste as you left her, or I shall be dead. You know me, and you know my two Pyrenees dogs. No one shall get at your daughter. Your pardon for having said so much."

The two soldiers embraced each other like men who have been in Siberia together.

That same day the "Courrier-Havre" published this terrible, simple, energetic notice:

"The house of Charles Mignon has suspended payment. But the undersigned assignees engage to pay all liabilities. On and after this date, holders of notes may obtain the usual discount. The sale of the landed estates will cover the current indebtedness.

"This notice is given for the honor of the house, and to prevent any disturbance in the money-market of Havre.

"Monsieur Charles Mignon sailed this morning on the *Modeste* for Asia Minor,

leaving full powers with the undersigned to sell all his property, including the personal.

"DUMAY, assignee of the Bank accounts,
"LATOURNELLE, notary, assignee of the city and suburban property,
"GOBENHEIM, assignee of the commercial property."

Latournelle had owed his prosperity to the goodness of Monsieur Mignon, who had lent him one hundred thousand francs in 1817 to buy the finest law practice in Havre. The poor man, who had no property of his own, was then forty years of age, with no prospect of being other than head-clerk for the rest of his days. He was the only man in Havre whose devotion could be compared with that of Dumay. As for Gobenheim, he profited by the liquidation to carry on a part of Monsieur Mignon's business, which lifted his own little bank into prominence.

While universal regrets for the disaster were expressed at the Exchange, on the wharves, and in private houses, and while praises of such an irreproachable, honorable, and beneficent man filled every mouth, Latournelle and Dumay, silent and active as ants, sold land, turned property into money, paid debts, and settled up affairs. Vilquin showed his generosity by purchasing the villa, the town-house, and a farm; and Latournelle made the most of his liberality by charging him a good price. Society wished to visit Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon; but they had already obeyed the father's last wishes by taking refuge in the Chalet, where they went on the very morning of his departure, which had been at first concealed from them. Not wishing to be shaken in his resolution by his grief at parting from them, the brave man said farewell to his wife and daughter while they slept. Three hundred visiting cards were left at the house. A fortnight later, as Charles had predicted, complete forgetfulness settled down upon the Chalet, and proved to these women the grandeur and wisdom of his resolution.

Dumay caused his master to be represented by agents in New York, Paris and London, and followed up the settlement of the three banking-houses whose failure had caused the ruin of the Havre house, thus realizing five hundred thousand francs between 1826 and 1828, an eighth of Charles's whole fortune; then, according to the directions which had been given him on the night of his master's departure, he sent that sum in the beginning of the year 1828 to New York through the house of Mongenod, to the credit of Monsieur Mignon. All this was done with military obedience, except in a matter of withholding thirty thousand francs for the personal expenses of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon as the colonel had ordered him to do, but which Dumay had not done. The Breton sold his town house for twenty thousand francs, which sum he gave to Madame Mignon, believing that the more capital he sent to his colonel the sooner the latter would return.

"A man might perish for the want of thirty thousand francs," Dumay remarked to Latournelle, who bought the little house at its full value, where an apartment was always kept ready for the inhabitants of the Chalet.

IV.

SUCH was to the celebrated house of Mignon at Havre the result of the crisis of 1825–26, which convulsed the principal business centers in Europe and caused, it will be remembered, the ruin of several Parisian bankers, and among others that of the president of the chamber of commerce.

It is therefore easy to understand how this great disaster, coming suddenly at the close of ten years of bourgeois sovereignty, might well have been the death of Bettina Wallenrod, who was again separated from her husband and ignorant of his fate—to her as adventurous and perilous as the exile to Siberia. But the grief which was dragging her to the grave was far other than these visible

sorrows. The caustic that was slowly eating into the poor mother's heart lay beneath a stone in the little graveyard of Ingouville, on which was inscribed :—

BETTINA CAROLINE MIGNON.
DIED AGED TWENTY-TWO.
PRAY FOR HER.
1827.

This inscription is for a young girl what many another epitaph has been for the dead, an index to an unknown book. Here is the book, in its terrible brevity; and it will explain the oath exacted and taken when the colonel and the lieutenant bade each other farewell.

A young man of charming appearance, named Georges d'Estourny, came to Havre for the commonplace purpose of being near the sea, and there he saw Caroline Mignon. A *soi-disant* fashionable Parisian is never without introductions, and he was invited through a friend of the Mignons to a fete given at Ingouville. He fell in love with Caroline and her fortune, and in three months he had accomplished his purpose and enticed her away. The father of a family of daughters should no more allow a young man whom he does not know to enter his home than he should leave books and papers lying about which he has not read. A young girl's innocence is like milk, which may be turned by a clap of thunder, an evil odor, a hot day, a mere breath, a nothing.

When Charles Mignon read his eldest daughter's farewell letter, he instantly dispatched Madame Dumay to Paris. The family gave out that a journey to another climate had suddenly been ordered by their physician: and the physician himself sustained the excuse, though unable to prevent the society of Havre from talking about the absence. "Such a vigorous young girl! with the complexion of a Spaniard, and that black hair!—she consumptive!" "Yes, they say she was imprudent in some way." "Ah, ah!" cried a Vilquin. "I am told she came back in a perspiration from a riding party, and drank iced water; at least, that is what Dr. Troussenard says."

When Madame Dumay returned to Havre the catastrophe of the failure had taken place, and society paid no further attention to Caroline's absence, or to the return of the cashier's wife. At the beginning of 1827 the newspapers rang with the trial of Georges D'Estourny, who was found guilty of cheating at cards. The young corsair escaped into foreign parts without paying any attention to Mademoiselle Mignon, who had ceased to be of value since the failure at Havre. Caroline heard of his infamous desertion and of her father's ruin almost at the same time. She returned home mortally ill, and wasted away at the Chalet in a few days. Her death at least protected her reputation. The illness that Monsieur Mignon had alleged to be the cause of her absence, and the doctor's order sending her to Nice, were now generally believed. Up to the last moment the mother hoped to save her daughter's life. Caroline was her darling, as Modeste was the father's. There was something touching in the two preferences. Caroline was the image of Charles, while Modeste was the reproduction of her mother. Both parents continued their love for each other in their children. Caroline, a daughter of Provence, inherited from her father the beautiful hair, black as a raven's wing, which is so much admired in the women of the South, together with the brown eye, almond-shaped and brilliant as a star, the olive complexion, the velvet skin as of some golden fruit, the arched instep, and the Spanish waist from which the short basque skirt fell crisply. Both mother and father were proud of the charming contrast between the sisters. "A devil and an angel!" they said to each other, laughing, little thinking it prophetic.

After weeping for a month in the solitude of her own room, where she would see no one, the poor mother came forth at last with injured eyes. Before losing her sight altogether she persisted, in spite of the wishes of her friends, in visiting her daughter's grave. That image remained vivid in the darkness which now fell upon her, as the red spectrum of the

last object upon which we have gazed shines in our eyes when we close them in full daylight. This terrible and double misfortune made Dumay, not less devoted, but more anxious about Modeste, now the only daughter of her father, although he was unaware of his loss. Madame Dumay, idolizing Modeste, like all women who have been deprived of children, cast her motherliness about the girl—without, however, disregarding the commands of her husband, who distrusted female intimacies. Those commands were brief. "If any man, of any age, or any rank whatever," Dumay had said, "speaks to Modeste, ogles her, makes love to her, he is a dead man. I will blow his brains out and give myself up to the authorities; my death may save her. If you do not wish to see my head cut off, you must take my place in watching her when I am obliged to go out."

For three years Dumay had examined his pistols every night. He seemed to have shared his oath with the Pyrenean hounds, two animals of uncommon sagacity. One slept inside the Chalet, and the other was stationed in a kennel which he never left, and where he never barked; but terrible would have been the moment had the pair made their teeth meet in some unknown adventurer.

The life led by mother and daughter at the Chalet can readily be imagined. Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, often accompanied by Gobenheim, came almost every evening to visit their friends and play whist. The conversation turned on the gossip of Havre and the petty events of provincial life. The little company separated between nine and ten o'clock. Modeste helped her mother to retire, and together they said their prayers, spoke of their hopes, and talked of the dear absent one. After kissing her mother, the girl went to her own room about ten o'clock. The next morning she prepared her mother for the day with the same care, the same prayers, the same conversation. To Modeste's praise be it said, that from the day when the terrible infirmity deprived her mother of her sight, she had been like a servant to her, displaying at all times the same solicitude; never wearying of the duty, never thinking it monotonous. Such constant devotion, combined with a tenderness rare among young girls, was thoroughly appreciated by those who witnessed it. To the Latournelle family, and to Monsieur and Madame Dumay, Modeste was, in soul, the pearl of great price.

On sunny days, between breakfast and dinner, Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay took a little walk to the seashore. Modeste accompanied them, for two arms were needed to support the blind mother. About a month before the scene in the midst of which this explanation comes like a parenthesis, Madame Mignon had taken counsel with her only friends, Madame Latournelle, the notary, and Dumay, while Madame Dumay carried Modeste in another direction for a long walk.

"Listen to what I have to say," said the blind woman. "My daughter is in love. I feel it; I see it. There is a singular change in her and I do not see how it is that none of you have perceived it."

"In the name of all that's honorable—" cried the lieutenant.

"Don't interrupt me, Dumay. For the last two months Modeste takes as much care of her personal appearance as if she expected to meet a lover. She has grown extremely fastidious about her shoes; she wants to set off her pretty feet; she scolds Madame Gobet, the shoemaker. It is the same thing with her milliner. Some days my poor darling is anxious and watchful, as if she expected some one. Her voice has curt tones when she answers a question, as though she were interrupted in the current of her thoughts and secret expectations. Then, when this awaited lover comes—"

"Good heavens!"

"Sit down, Dumay," said the blind woman. "Well, then Modeste is gay. Oh! she is not gay to your sight; you cannot catch these gradations; they are too delicate for eyes that see only the outside of nature. Her gayety betrays itself to me by the tones of her voice, by certain accents which I alone can catch and understand. Modeste then, instead

of sitting still and thoughtful, gives vent to an inward activity by impulsive movements—in short, she is happy. There is a grace, a charm in the very ideas she utters. Ah, my friends, I know happiness as well as I know sorrow. By the kiss my Modeste gives me I can guess what is passing within her. I know whether she has received what she was looking for, or whether she is uneasy and expectant. There are many shades in a kiss, even in that of an innocent young girl. Modeste is innocence itself; but hers is now the innocence of knowledge, not of ignorance. I may be blind, but my tenderness is clairvoyant, and I charge you to watch over my daughter."

Dumay, now actually ferocious, the notary, in the character of a man bound to ferret out a mystery, Madame Latournelle, the deceived chaperon, and Madame Dumay, sharing her husband's fears, became at once a set of spies, and Modeste from this day forth was never left alone for an instant. Dumay passed his nights under her window wrapped in his cloak like a jealous Spaniard; but with all his military sagacity he was unable to detect the least suspicious sign. Unless she loved the nightingales in Vilquin's park, or some prince Lutin, Modeste could have seen no one, and could have neither given nor received a signal. Madame Dumay, who never went to bed till she knew Modeste was asleep, watched the road from the upper windows of the Chalet with a vigilance equal to her husband's. Under these eight Argus eyes the blameless child, whose least motions were studied and analyzed, came out of the ordeal so fully acquitted of all criminal conversation that the four friends declared to each other privately that Madame Mignon was foolishly overanxious. Madame Latournelle, who always took Modeste to church and brought her back again, was commissioned to tell the mother that she was mistaken about her daughter.

"Modeste," she said, "is a young girl of very exalted ideas; she becomes enthusiastic over the poetry of one writer or the prose of another. You were not able to judge the impression made upon her by that scaffold symphony, 'The Last Hours of a Convict' [the saying was Butscha's, who supplied wit to his benefactress with a lavish hand]; but she seemed to me all but crazy with admiration for that Monsieur Hugo. I'm sure I don't know where such people [Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Byron being *such people* to the Madame Latournelles] get their ideas. Modeste kept talking to me of Childe Harold, and as I did not wish to get the worst of the argument I was silly enough to try to read the thing, in order to be able to reason with her. Perhaps it was the fault of the translator, but it actually turned my stomach; I was dazed; I couldn't possibly finish it. Why, the man talks about comparisons that howl, rocks that vanish, and waves of war! However, as he is only a traveling Englishman, we must expect absurdities—though his are really inexcusable. He takes you to Spain, and sets you in the clouds above the Alps, and makes the torrents talk, and the stars; and then there are too many virgins! I have no patience with it! Then, after Napoleon's campaigns, we have sonorous brass and flaming cannon-balls, rolling along from page to page. Modeste tells me that all that bathos is put in by the translator, and that I ought to read the book in English. But I certainly shall not learn English to read Lord Byron when I didn't learn it to teach Exupère. I much prefer the novels of Ducray-Duménil to all these English romances. I'm too good a Norman to fall in love with foreign things—above all when they come from England."

Madame Mignon, notwithstanding her melancholy, could not help smiling at the idea of Madame Latournelle reading Childe Harold. The stern scion of a parliamentary house accepted the smile as an approval of her doctrines.

"And, therefore, my dear Madame Mignon," she went on, "you have taken Modeste's fancies, which are nothing but the results of her reading, for a love-affair. She is twenty years old. Girls fall in love with themselves at that age; they dress to see themselves well dressed. I remember I used to put a man's hat on

my little sister, who is now dead, and pretend we were monsieur and madame. You had a very happy youth in Frankfort; but let us be just—Modeste is living here without the slightest amusement. Her slightest wish is gratified, it is true, but still she knows she is shut up and watched, and the life she leads would give her no pleasures at all if it were not for the amusement she gets out of her books. She loves no one but you. You ought to be very glad that she gets enthusiastic over the corsairs of Byron and the romantic heroes of Walter Scott and your own Germans, Egmont, Goethe, Werther, Schiller, and all the other 'ers.' "

"Well, madame, what do you say to that?" asked Dumay, respectfully, alarmed at Madame Mignon's silence.

"Modeste is not only inclined to love, but she loves some man," answered the mother, obstinately.

"Madame, my life is at stake, and you must allow me—not for my sake, but for my wife, my colonel, and all of us—to try and find out whether it is the mother or the watch-dog who is mistaken."

"It is you, Dumay. Ah! if I could but see my daughter!" cried the poor woman.

"But whom could she possibly love?" asked the notary. "I'll answer for my Exupère."

"It can't be Gobenheim," said Dumay, "for since the colonel went away he has not spent nine hours a week in this house. Besides, he never thinks of Modeste—that five-franc-piece of a man! His uncle Gobenheim-Keller is all the time writing him, 'Get rich enough to marry a Keller.' With that idea in his mind, there is no fear that he even knows which sex Modeste belongs to. Those are the only men who ever come here. I don't count Butscha, poor little hump-back! I am very fond of him. He is your Dumay, madame," he added to Madame Latournelle. "Butscha knows very well that a mere glance at Modeste would cost him a Breton ducking. Not a soul has any communication with this house. Madame Latournelle, who takes Modeste to church ever since your—your great misfortune, madame, has carefully watched her lately on the way and all through the service, and has seen nothing suspicious. In short, if I must confess the truth, I have myself raked all the paths about the house every evening for the last month, and found no trace of footsteps in the morning."

"Rakes are neither costly nor difficult to handle," remarked the daughter of Germany.

"But the dogs?" cried Dumay.

"Lovers know how to find philters for them," answered Madame Mignon.

"If you are right, I might as well blow my brains out," exclaimed Dumay, "for I should be lost."

"Why so, Dumay?" said the blind woman.

"Ah, madame, I could never meet my colonel's eye if he did not find his daughter—particularly now that she is his only daughter—as pure and virtuous as she was when he said to me on the vessel, 'Let no fear of the scaffold hinder you, Dumay, if the honor of my Modeste is at stake.' "

"Ah! I recognize you both there," said Madame Mignon, much moved.

"I'll wager my salvation that Modeste is as pure as she was in her cradle," exclaimed Madame Dumay.

"Well, I shall make certain of it," replied her husband, "if Madame la Comtesse will allow me to employ certain means; for old troopers understand strategy."

"I will allow you to do anything that shall enlighten us, if it does no injury to my last child."

"What are you going to do, Anne?" asked Madame Dumay; "how can you discover a young girl's secret if she means to hide it?"

"Obey me, all of you!" cried the lieutenant. "I shall need everybody."

If this rapid sketch were cleverly developed it would give a whole picture of manners and customs in which many a family could recognize the events of their own history; but it must suffice as it is to explain the importance of the few details heretofore given about persons and

things on the memorable evening when the old soldier had pitted himself against the young girl, intending to wrench from the recesses of her heart the secret of a love and a lover seen only by a blind mother.

V.

An hour went by in solemn stillness, interrupted only by the cabalistic phrases of the whist-players: "Spades!" "Trumped!" "Cut!" "How are honors?" "Two to four." "Whose deal?" —phrases which represent in these days the intense emotions of European aristocracy. Modeste continued to work, without apparently wondering at her mother's silence. Madame Mignon's handkerchief slipped from her lap to the floor; Butscha darted forward to pick it up, and as he returned it he whispered in Modeste's ear, "Take care!" Modeste raised a pair of wondering eyes, whose puzzled glance filled the poor cripple with joy unspeakable. "She is not in love!" he whispered to himself, rubbing his hands until he nearly rubbed the skin off. Just then Exupère tore through the garden and the house, plunged into the salon like an avalanche, and said to Dumay in an audible whisper, "The young man is here!" Dumay sprang for his pistols and rushed out.

"Good God! suppose he kills him!" cried Madame Dumay, bursting into tears.

"What is the matter?" asked Modeste, looking innocently at her friends and not betraying the slightest fear.

"It is all about a young man who is hanging round the house," cried Madame Latournelle.

"Well!" said Modeste, "why should Dumay kill him?"

"*Sancta simplicita!*" ejaculated Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander contemplates Babylon in Lebrun's picture.

"Where are you going, Modeste?" asked the mother as her daughter rose to leave the room.

"To get ready for your bedtime, mamma," answered Modeste, in a voice as pure as the tones of a harmonica.

"You haven't paid your expenses," said the dwarf to Dumay when he returned.

"Modeste is as pure as the Virgin on our altar," cried Madame Latournelle.

"Good God! such excitements wear me out," said Dumay; "and yet I'm a strong man."

"May I lose twenty-five sous if I understand a word of what you are saying," remarked Gobenheim. "You act as if you were crazy."

"And yet it is all about a treasure," said Butscha, standing on tip-toe to whisper in Gobenheim's ear.

"Dumay, I am sorry to say that I am still almost sure of what I told you," persisted Madame Mignon.

"It is for you, now, to prove that we are mistaken, madame," said Dumay calmly.

Discovering that the matter in question was only Modeste's honor, Gobenheim took his hat, bowed, and walked off, carrying his ten sous with him—there being evidently no hope of another rubber.

"Exupère, and you, too, Butscha, may leave us," said Madame Latournellei "Go back to Havre; you will get there n time for the last piece at the theater. I'll pay for your tickets."

When the four friends were alone with Madame Mignon, Madame Latournelle, after looking at Dumay, who being a Breton understood the mother's obstinacy, and at her husband who was playing with the cards, felt herself authorized to speak.

"Come, Madame Mignon, tell us what decisive thing has come into your mind."

"Ah, my good friend, if you were a musician you would have understood Modeste's language as I do, when she speaks of love."

The piano of Mignon's daughters was among the few articles of furniture which had been moved from the town house to the Chalet. Modeste sometimes conjured away her weariness by practicing, without a master. She was a born musician, and played to enliven her mother.

She sang by nature, and loved the German airs which her mother taught her. From these lessons and these attempts at self-instruction came a phenomenon not uncommon to natures with a musical vocation; Modeste composed, as far as a person ignorant of the laws of harmony can be said to compose, tender little lyric melodies. Melody is to music what imagery and sentiment are to poetry, a flower that may blossom spontaneously. Nations have had melodies before harmony—botany came later than flowers. In like manner, Modeste, who knew nothing of the painter's art except what she had seen her sister do in water-color, would have stood subdued and fascinated before the pictures of Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Murillo, Rembrandt, Albert Dürer, Holbein—the great ideals of many lands. Lately, for at least a month, Modeste had warbled the songs of nightingales, attempts whose poetry and meaning had roused the attention of her mother, already surprised by her sudden eagerness for composition and her fancy for putting airs to unknown words.

"If your suspicions have no other foundation," said Latournelle to Madame Mignon, "I pity your susceptibility."

"When a Breton girl sings," said Dumay, gloomily, "the lover is not far off."

"I will let you hear Modeste when she is improvising," said the mother, "and you shall judge for yourselves—"

"Poor girl!" said Madame Dumay, "if she only knew our anxiety she would be deeply distressed; she would tell us the truth—especially if she knew what it means for Dumay."

"My friends, I will question my daughter to-morrow," said Madame Mignon; "perhaps I shall obtain more by tenderness than you have discovered by trickery."

Was the comedy of the "Fille mal Gardée" being played here—as it is everywhere and forever—under the noses of these faithful spies, these honest Bartholos, these vigilant Pyrenean hounds, without their being able to ferret out, detect, nor even surmise the lover, the love affair, the smoke of the fire. It was not the result of a struggle between the jailers and the prisoner, between the despotism of a dungeon and the liberty of a victim—it was simply the never-ending repetition of the first scene played when the curtain of Creation rose; it was Eve in Paradise.

And now, which of the two, the mother or the watch-dog, was right?

None of the persons who were about Modeste could understand that maiden heart—for the soul and the face were in harmony. The girl had transported her existence into a world as much denied and disbelieved in in these days of ours as the new world of Christopher Columbus in the sixteenth century. Fortunately, she kept her own counsel, or they would have thought her crazy. But first we must explain the influence of the past upon her nature.

Two events had formed the soul and developed the intelligence of this young girl. Monsieur and Madame Mignon, warned by the fate that had overtaken Caroline, had resolved, just before the failure, to marry Modeste. They had chosen the son of a rich banker, formerly of Hamburg, but established in Havre since 1815—a man, moreover, who was under obligations to them. This young man, whose name was Francisque Althor, the dandy of Havre, endowed with a certain vulgar beauty in which the middle classes delight, well-made, well-fleshed, and with a fine complexion, abandoned his betrothed so hastily on the day of her father's failure that neither Modeste nor her mother nor either of the Dumays had seen him since. Latournelle had ventured a question on the subject to Jacob Althor, the father; but he had only shrugged his shoulders and replied, "I really don't know what you mean."

This answer, told to Modeste in order to give her experience, was a lesson which she learned all the more readily because Latournelle and Dumay made many and long comments on the cowardly desertion. The daughters of Charles Mignon, like spoiled children, had all their wishes gratified; they rode on horseback, kept their own horses and grooms, and otherwise

enjoyed a perilous liberty. Seeing herself in possession of an official lover, Modeste had allowed Francisque to kiss her hand, and take her by the waist to mount her. She accepted his flowers and all the little proofs of tenderness with which a lover is provided; she even worked him a purse, believing in such ties—strong indeed to noble souls, but cobwebs for the Gobenheims, the Vilquins, and the Althors.

In the spring which followed the removal of Madame Mignon and her daughter to the Chalet, Francisque Althor came to dine with the Vilquins. Happening to see Modeste over the wall at the foot of the lawn, he turned away his head. Six weeks later he married the eldest Mademoiselle Vilquin. In this way Modeste, young, beautiful, and of high birth, learned the lesson that for three months she had been nothing more than Mademoiselle Million. Her well-known poverty became a sentinel defending the approaches to the Chalet fully as well as the prudence of the Dumays, or the vigilance of the Latournelles. The talk of the town ran for a time on Mademoiselle Mignon's position only to insult her with such speeches as:

"Poor girl! what will become of her?—an old maid, of course."

"What a fate! to have had the world at her feet; to have had the chance to marry Francisque Althor—and now, nobody willing to take her!"

"After a life of luxury, to come down to such poverty—"

And these insults were not uttered in secret or left to Modeste's imagination; she heard them spoken more than once by the young men and women of Havre as they walked to Ingouville, and, knowing that Madame Mignon and her daughter lived at the Chalet, talked of them as they passed the pretty little house. Friends of the Vilquins expressed surprise that the mother and daughter were willing to live on in the midst of the scenes of their former splendor. From behind her closed blinds Modeste sometimes heard such insolence as this:—

"I don't see how they can live there," some one would say as he paced the villa lawn—perhaps to assist Vilquin in getting rid of his tenant.

"What do you suppose they live on? What can they do there?"

"I am told the old woman has become blind."

"Is Mademoiselle Mignon still pretty? Dear me, how dashing she used to be! Well, she hasn't any horses now."

Most young girls on hearing these spiteful and silly speeches, born of an envy that now rushed, peevish and driveling, to avenge the past, would have felt the blood mount to their foreheads; others would have wept; some would have grown angry; but Modeste smiled, as we smile at the theater while listening to the actors. Her pride could not descend to the level of such speeches.

The other event was more serious than this mercantile cowardice. Bettina Caroline died in the arms of her younger sister, who had nursed her with the devotion of girlhood, and the curiosity of an untainted imagination. In the silence of long nights the sisters exchanged many confidences. With what dramatic interest was poor Bettina invested in the eyes of the innocent Modeste! Bettina knew passion through sorrow only, and she was dying because she had loved. To young girls every man, scoundrel though he be, is still a lover. Passion is the one thing absolutely real in the things of life, and it insists on its supremacy. Georges d'Estourny, gambler, criminal, and debauchee, remained always in the memory of the sisters, the elegant Parisian of the fetes of Havre, the admired of the womenkind (Bettina believed she had carried him off from the coquettish Madame Vilquin), and Bettina's happy lover. Such adoration in young girls is stronger than all social condemnations. To Bettina's thinking, justice had been deceived; if not, how could it have condemned a man who had loved her for six months?—loved her to distraction in the mysterious retreat to which Georges had taken her in Paris—that he might be at liberty to go his own way. Thus the dying girl had inoculated her sister with love. They had often talked of the great drama of

passion which imagination still further enhances; and Bettina carried with her to the grave her sister's purity, leaving her, if not informed, at least devoured with curiosity.

Nevertheless, remorse had set its fangs too sharply in Bettina's heart not to force her to warn her sister. In the midst of her own confessions she had never failed to preach duty and implicit obedience to Modeste. On the evening of her death she implored her to remember the tears that soaked her pillow, and not to imitate a conduct which so much suffering could scarcely expiate. Bettina accused herself of having brought a curse upon the family, and died in despair at being unable to obtain her father's pardon. Notwithstanding the consolations of religion, softened by such repentance, she cried in heartrending tones with her latest breath: "O father! father!" "Never give your heart without your hand," she said to Modeste an hour before she died; "and above all, accept no attentions from any man without the advice of papa and mamma."

These words, so earnest in their truth, uttered in the hour of death, had more effect upon Modeste than if Bettina had exacted a solemn oath. The dying girl, farseeing as a prophet, drew from beneath her pillow a ring which she had sent by her faithful maid, Françoise Cochet, to be engraved in Havre with these words, "Think of Bettina, 1827." A few moments before she drew her last breath she placed it on her sister's finger, begging her to keep it there until she married. Thus there had been between these two young girls a strange commingling of bitter remorse and the artless visions of a fleeting springtime too early blighted by the keen north wind of desertion; yet their tears, regrets, and memories were always subordinate to their horror of evil.

Nevertheless, this drama of the poor young girl returning to die under a roof of elegant poverty, the failure of her father, the baseness of her betrothed, and the blindness of her mother, had touched only the surface of Modeste's life, by which alone the Dumays and the Latournelles judged her; for no devotion of friends can take the place of a mother's eye. The monotonous life in the dainty little Chalet, surrounded by the choice flowers which Dumay cultivated; the family customs, as regular as clockwork, the provincial decorum, the games at whist while the mother knitted and the daughter sewed, the silence, broken only by the roar of the sea in the equinoctial storms—all this monastic tranquillity concealed an inner and tumultuous life, that of ideas, of the spiritual being. We sometimes wonder how it is possible for young girls to do wrong; but those who do so have no blind mother to send her plummet line of intuition to the depths of the subterranean fancies of a virgin heart. The Dumays slept when Modeste opened her window, as it were to watch for the passing of a man—the man of her dreams, the expected knight who was to mount her behind him and ride away under the fire of Dumay's pistols.

Modeste was much depressed after her sister's death, and she flung herself into the practice of reading, until her mind became sodden in it. Brought up to speak two languages, she was as proficient in German as in French; she had also, together with her sister, learned English from Madame Dumay. Being very little overlooked in the matter of reading by the people about her, who had no literary knowledge, Modeste fed her soul on the modern masterpieces of three literatures, English, French, and German. Lord Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, Hugo, Lamartine, Crabbe, Moore, the great works of the 17th and 18th centuries, history, drama, and fiction, from Astræa to Manon Lescaut, from Montaigne's Essays to Diderot, from the Fabliaux to the Nouvelle Héloïse, the thoughts of three lands crowded with confused images that girlish head, sublime in its cold guilelessness, its native chastity, from which there sprang full-armed, brilliant, sincere, and strong, an overwhelming admiration for genius. To Modeste a new book was an event; a

masterpiece that would have horrified Madame Latournelle made her happy—yet sad, if the great work did not play havoc with her heart. A lyric instinct bubbled in that girlish soul, so full of the beautiful illusions of youth. But of this radiant existence not a gleam reached the surface of daily life; it escaped Dumay and his wife, as well as the Latournelles; the ears of the blind mother alone caught the crackling of its flame.

The profound disdain which Modeste now conceived for ordinary men gave to her face a look of pride, an untamed shyness, which tempered her Teutonic simplicity, and accorded well with a peculiarity of her head. The hair growing in a point above the forehead seemed the continuation of a slight line which thought had already furrowed between the eyebrows, and made the expression of untamability perhaps a shade too strong. The voice of this charming child, whom her father, delighting in her wit, was wont to call his "little proverb of Solomon," had acquired a wonderful flexibility through the practice of three languages. This advantage was still further enhanced by a natural bell-like tone both sweet and fresh, which touched the heart as delightfully as it did the ear. If the mother could no longer see the signs of a noble destiny upon her daughter's brow, she could study the transitions of her soul's development in the accents of that voice attuned to love.

VI.

To the insatiable period of Modeste's reading succeeded the exercise of that strange faculty with which lively imaginations are endowed — the power of making herself an actor in a dream-existence; of representing to her own mind the things desired so vividly that they seemed actually to attain reality; in short, to enjoy by thought—to live out her years within her mind; to marry; to grow old; to attend her own funeral like Charles V.; to play within herself the comedy of life and, if need be, that of death. Modeste was playing by herself the comedy of Love. She fancied herself adored to the summit of her wishes throughout all phases of social life. Sometimes as the heroine of a dark romance, she loved the executioner, or some wretch who ended his days upon the scaffold, or, like her sister, a Parisian dandy without a penny, whose struggles were all beneath a garret-roof. Sometimes she was Ninon, scorning men amid continual fetes; or some applauded actress, or gay adventuress, exhausting the luck of Gil Blas, or the triumphs of Pasta, Malibran, and Florine. Then, weary of horrors and excitements, she returned to actual life. She married a notary, she eat the plain brown bread of an honest life, she saw herself a Madame Latournelle; she accepted a painful existence, she bore the burdens of a breadwinner. After that she went back to the romances: she was loved for her beauty; a son of a peer of France, an eccentric, artistic young man, divined her heart, and recognized the star which the genius of a De Staël had planted on her brow. Her father returned, possessing millions. Authorized by his experience, she put her lovers to certain tests, while carefully guarding her own independence; she owned a magnificent chateau, servants, horses, carriages, the choicest of everything that luxury could bestow, and kept her suitors uncertain until she was forty years old, at which age she made her choice.

This edition of the Arabian Nights lasted nearly a year, and taught Modeste the sense of satiety through thought. She held her life too often in her hand, she said to herself philosophically and with too real a bitterness, too seriously, and too often, "Well, what comes afterward?" not to have plunged to her waist in the deep disgust which all men of genius feel when they try to extricate themselves by intense toil from the work to which they have devoted themselves. If it had not been for her youth and her rich nature, Modeste would have entered a cloister. But this sense of satiety cast her, satu-

rated as she still was with Catholic spirituality, into the love of Good, the infinity of heaven. She thought of charity as the true occupation of life; but she cowered in the gloomy dreariness of finding in it no food for the fancy that lay crouching in her heart like an insect at the bottom of a calyx. Meanwhile she sat tranquilly sewing garments for the children of the poor, and listening absently to the grumblings of Monsieur Latournelle when he reproached Dumay for "cutting out" the thirteenth card or drawing his last trump.

Her religious faith drove Modeste for a time into a singular track of thought. She imagined that if she became sinless (speaking ecclesiastically) she would attain to such a state of sanctity that God would hear her and accomplish her desires. "Faith," she thought, "can remove mountains; Christ has said so. The Saviour led his apostle upon the waters of the lake Tiberias; and I, all I ask of God is a husband to love me; that is easier than walking upon the sea." She fasted through the next Lent, and did not commit a single sin; then she said to herself that on a certain day coming out of church she would meet a handsome young man who was worthy of her, of whom her mother would approve, and who would fall madly in love with her. When the day came on which she had, as it were, summoned God to send her an angel, she was persistently followed by a rather disgusting beggar; moreover, it rained heavily, and not a single young man was in the streets. On another occasion she went to walk on the jetty to see the English travelers land; but each Englishman had an Englishwoman, nearly as handsome as Modeste herself, who saw no one at all resembling a wandering Childe Harold. Tears overcame her, as she sat down like Marius on the ruins of her imagination. But on the day when she *subpœnaed* God for the third time she firmly believed that the Elect of her dreams was within the church, hiding, perhaps out of delicacy, behind one of the pillars, round all of which she dragged Madame Latournelle on a tour of inspection. After this failure, she deposed the Deity from omnipotence. She often held conversations with this imaginary lover, inventing questions and answers, and bestowing upon him a great deal of wit and intelligence.

The excessive ambition of her heart, hidden within these romances, were the real explanation of the prudent conduct which the good people who watched over Modeste so much admired; they might have brought her any number of young Althors or Vilquins, and she would never have stooped to such clowns. She wanted, purely and simply, a man of genius—talent seemed to her a very small thing; just as a lawyer is nothing to a girl who aims for an embassador. She desired wealth, but only to cast it at the feet of her idol. Indeed, the golden background of these visions was far less rich than the treasury of her own heart, filled with womanly delicacy; for its dominant desire was to bestow happiness and wealth upon some Tasso, some Milton, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Murat, or Christopher Columbus.

Ordinary miseries did not seriously touch this youthful soul, who longed to extinguish the fires of those martyrs who were ignored and rejected in their own day. She thirsted for the unknown sufferings, the great griefs of thought. Sometimes she imagined balms of Gilead, soothing melodies which might have allayed the savage misanthropy of Rousseau. Or she fancied herself the wife of Lord Byron; guessing intuitively his contempt for the real, she made herself as fantastic as the poetry of Manfred, and provided for his skepticism by making him a Catholic. Modeste attributed Molière's melancholy to the women of the seventeenth century. "Why is there not some one woman," she asked herself, "loving, beautiful, and rich, ready to stand beside each man of genius and be his slave, like Lara, the mysterious page?" She had, as the reader perceives, fully understood *il pianto*, which the English poet chanted by the mouth of his Gulnare. Modeste greatly admired the behavior of the young Englishwoman who offered herself to Crébillon, the son, and whom he married.

The story of Sterne and Eliza Draper was her life and happiness for several months. She imagined herself the heroine of a like romance, and many a time she rehearsed in imagination the sublime rôle of Eliza. The sensibility so charmingly expressed in that delightful correspondence filled her eyes with tears which, it is said, are lacking in those of the most spirituel of English writers.

Modeste existed for some time on a comprehension, not only of the works, but of the characters of her favorite authors —Goldsmith, the author of Obermann, Charles Nodier, Maturin. The poorest and the most suffering among them were her deities; she guessed their trials, she initiated herself into a destitution where the thoughts of genius brooded, and poured upon it the treasures of her heart; she fancied herself the author of the material well-being of these great men, martyrs to their own talents. This noble compassion, this intuition of the struggles of toil, this worship of genius, are among the rarest perceptions that ever fluttered through the souls of women. They are, in the first place, a secret between the woman and God, for they are hidden; in them there is nothing striking, nothing that gratifies the vanity—that powerful auxiliary to all action among the French.

Out of this third period of the development of her ideas, there was born in Modeste a passionate desire to penetrate to the heart of one of these abnormal beings; to understand the working of the thoughts and the hidden griefs of genius—to know not only what it wanted but what it was. At the period when this story begins, these vagaries of fancy, these excursions of her soul into the void, these feelers put forth into the darkness of the future, the impatience of an ungiven love to reach a goal, the nobility of all her thoughts of life, the decision of her mind to suffer in a sphere of higher things instead of floundering in the marshes of provincial life like her mother, the pledge she had made to herself never to fail in conduct, but to respect her father's hearth and bring it nothing but happiness—all this world of feeling and sentiment had lately come to a climax and taken shape. Modeste wished to be the friend and companion of a poet, an artist, a man in some way superior to the crowd of men. But she intended to choose him—not to give him her heart, her life, her infinite tenderness freed from the trammels of passion, until she had carefully and deeply studied him.

She began this pretty romance by simply enjoying it. Profound tranquillity settled down upon her soul. Her cheeks became softly colored, and she was the beautiful and noble image of Germany, such as we have lately seen her, the glory of the Chalet, the pride of Madame Latournelle and the Dumays.

Modeste was then living a double existence. She performed with humble, loving care all the minute duties of the homely life at the Chalet, using them as a rein to guide the poetry of her ideal life, like the Carthusian monks who labor methodically on material things to leave their souls the freer to develop in prayer. All great minds have bound themselves to some form of mechanical toil in order to gain the greater mastery of thought. Spinosa ground glasses for spectacles; Bayle counted the tiles on the roof; Montesquieu gardened. The body being thus subdued, the soul could spread its wings in all security.

Madame Mignon, who could read her daughter's soul, was therefore right. Modeste loved; she loved with that rare platonic love, so little understood, the first illusion of a young girl, the most delicate of all sentiments, a very dainty of the heart. She drank deep draughts from the chalice of the unknown, the impossible, the visionary. She admired the blue plumage of that bird in the paradise of young girls, which sings at a distance, which no hand can touch, no gun can cover, as it flits across the sight; whose magic colors, like sparkling jewels, dazzle the eye, and which youth never sees again when Reality, the hideous hag, appears with witnesses accompanied by the mayor. To live the very poetry of love and not to see the lover—ah, what sweet intoxication! what visionary rapture! a chimera with flowing mane and outspread wings!

The following is the puerile and even silly event which decided the future life of this young girl.

Modeste saw in a bookseller's window a lithographic portrait of one of her favorites, Canalis. We all know how false such pictures are — the fruits of a shameless speculation, which seizes upon the personality of celebrated individuals as if their faces were public property.

In this instance Canalis, sketched in a Byronic pose, was offering to public admiration his floating locks, his bare throat, and the unfathomable brow which every bard ought to possess. Victor Hugo's forehead will make more persons shave their heads than the number of incipient marshals ever killed by the glory of Napoleon. This face (poetic through mercantile necessity) caught Modeste's eye. The day on which she bought the portrait one of Arthèz's best books happened to be published. We are compelled to admit, though it may be to Modeste's injury, that she hesitated long between the illustrious poet and the illustrious prose-writer. Which of these celebrated men was free?—that was the question.

Modeste began by securing the co-operation of Françoise Cochet, a maid taken from Havre and brought back again by poor Bettina, whom Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay now employed by the day, and who lived in Havre. Modeste took her to her own room and assured her that she would never cause her parents any grief, and that she should never pass the limits imposed upon a young girl? As to Françoise herself she would be well provided for after the return of Monsieur Mignon, on condition that she would do a certain service and keep it an inviolable secret. What was it? Why, a very little thing—perfectly innocent. All that Modeste wanted of her accomplice was to put certain letters into the post, and to bring back those which would be directed to Françoise Cochet. The agreement made, Modeste wrote a polite note to Dauriat, publisher of the poems of Canalis, asking, in the interest of that great poet, if he were married. She requested the publisher to address his answer to Mademoiselle Françoise Cochet, *poste restante*, Havre.

Duriat, incapable of taking the epistle seriously, wrote a reply in presence of four or five journalists who happened to be in his office at the time, each of whom added his particular stroke of wit to the production.

"MADEMOISELLE—Canalis (Baron of), Constant Cyr Melchior, member of the French Academy, born in 1800, at Canalis (Corrèze), five feet four inches in height, in good condition, vaccinated, spotless birth, has given a substitute to the conscription, enjoys perfect health, owns a small patrimonial estate in the Corrèze, and wishes to marry, but the lady must be wealthy.

"He beareth per pale, gules an ax or, sable three shells argent, surmounted by a baron's coronet; supporters, two larches, vert. Motto: *Or et fer* (never auriferous).

"The first Canalis, who went to the Holy Land with the First Crusade, is cited in the chronicles of Auvergne as being armed only with an ax on account of the family indigence, which to this day weighs heavily on the race; hence the escutcheon, without a doubt. This noble baron, who is also famous for having discomfited a vast number of infidels, died near Jerusalem, without *or* or *fer*, as naked as a worm, on the plains of Ascalon, ambulances not being then invented.

"The château of Canalis (the domain yields a few chestnuts) consists of two dismantled towers, united by a piece of wall covered by a fine ivy, and is taxed at twenty-two francs.

"The undersigned (publisher) calls attention to the fact that he pays ten thousand francs for every volume of poetry written by Monsieur de Canalis, who does not give his shells for nothing.

"The singer of the Corrèze lives in the Rue de Paradis-Poissonière, number 29, which is a highly suitable location for a poet of the angelic school.

"Several noble ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain are said to take the path to Paradise and protect its god. The

king, Charles X., thinks so highly of this great poet as to believe him capable of helping to govern the country; he has lately made him officer of the Legion of Honor, and (what pays him better) president of the court of Claims at the foreign office. These functions do not hinder this great genius from drawing an annuity of three thousand francs out of the fund for the encouragement of arts and belles lettres. This monetary success has occasioned in literature an eighth plague which Egypt escaped—that of *verses*.

"The last edition of the works of Canalis, printed on vellum, royal 8vo, from the press of Didot, with illustrations by Bixiou, Joseph Bridau, Schinner, Sommervieux, etc., is in five volumes, price, nine francs post-paid."

This letter fell like a cobble-stone on a tulip. A poet, secretary of claims, getting a stipend in a public office, drawing an annuity, seeking a decoration, adored by the women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—was that the muddy minstrel lingering along the quays, sad, dreamy, worn with toil, and re-entering his garret fraught with poetry? However, Modeste perceived the irony of the envious bookseller, who said: "I invented Canalis; I made Nathan!" Besides, she re-read her hero's poems—verses extremely seductive, and full of hypocrisy, which require a word of analysis, were it only to explain her infatuation.

Canalis may be distinguished from Lamartine, chief of the angelic school, by a wheedling tone like that of a sick-nurse, a treacherous sweetness and a delightful discipline. The chief with his strident cry is an eagle; Canalis, rose and white, is a flamingo. In him women find the friend they seek, their interpreter, and a safe confidant; a being who understands them, and who explains them to themselves. The wide margins given by Dauriat to the last edition were crowded with Modeste's penciled sentiments, expressing her sympathy with this tender and dreamy spirit. Canalis did not possess the gift of life; he could not breathe existence into his creations; but he knew how to calm vague sufferings like those which assailed Modeste. He spoke to young girls in their own language; he could allay the anguish of a bleeding wound and lull the moans and sobs of woe. His gift did not lie in stirring words, nor in the remedy of strong emotions; he contented himself with saying in harmonious tones which compelled belief, "I suffer with you; I understand you; come with me; let us weep together beside the brook, beneath the willows." And they followed him! They listened to his empty and sonorous poetry like infants to a nurse's lullaby. Canalis, like Nodier, enchanted the reader by an artlessness which was genuine in the prose writer and artificial in the poet; by his tact, his smile, the shedding of his rose-leaves, and his infantile philosophy. He counterfeited so well the language of early youth that he led one back to the prairie-land of illusions. We can be pitiless to the eagles, requiring from them the quality of the diamond, incorruptible perfection; but as for Canalis, we take him for what he is and let the rest go. He seems a good fellow; the affectations of the angelic school have given him success, just as a woman succeeds when she plays the *ingénue* cleverly, and simulates surprise, youth, innocence betrayed, the wounded angel.

Modeste, recovering her first impressions, renewed her confidence in that soul and in that countenance as ravishing as the face of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. She paid no further attention to the publisher. And so, about the beginning of the month of August she wrote the following letter to this Dorat of the sacristy, who still ranks as a star of the modern Pleiades.

"To Monsieur de Canalis—I have often wished to write to you, monsieur, to tell you how much I admire your genius. I feel the need of expressing to you the admiration of a poor country girl, lonely in her little corner, whose only happiness is to read your thoughts. I have read René, and I come to you. Sadness leads to reverie. How many

other women are sending you the homage of their secret thoughts? What chance have I for notice among so many? What will this paper, filled with my soul, be to you, any more than the perfumed letters which already beset you. I am more at a disadvantage than any others, for I wish to remain unknown and yet to receive your entire confidence—as though you had long known me.

"Answer my letter and be friendly with me. I cannot promise to make myself known to you, though I do not positively say I will not some day do so.

"What shall I add? Do you see the effort which it has been to me to write this letter? Permit me to offer you my hand—that of a friend, ah! a true friend.

"Your servant, O. D'ESTE M.

"P. S.—If you do me the favor to answer this letter address your reply, if you please, to Mademoiselle F. Cochet, *poste restante,* Havre."

VII.

ALL young girls, whether romantic or otherwise, can imagine with what impatience Modeste lived through the next few days. The air was full of tongues of fire. The trees were like a plumage. She was not conscious of a body; she hovered in space, the earth flew from beneath her feet. Full of admiration for the post-office, she followed her little sheet of paper on its way; she was happy, as we all are happy at twenty years of age, in the first exercise of our will. She was possessed, as in the Middle Ages. She imagined the poet's study; she saw him unsealing her letter; and then followed myriads of suppositions.

After sketching the poetry we cannot do less than give the profile of the poet. Canalis was a short, spare man, with an air of good-breeding, a dark-complexioned, moon-shaped face, and rather a small head like that of a man who has more vanity than pride. He loved luxury, rank, and splendor. Money was of more importance to him than to most men. Proud of his birth, even more than of his talent, he destroyed the value of his ancestors by making too many pretensions—after all, the Canalis are not Navarreins, nor Cadignans, nor Grandlieus, nor Negrepelisses.

Nature, however, helped him out in his pretensions. He had those eyes of Eastern effulgence which we demand in a poet, a delicate charm of manner, and a vibrant voice; yet a natural charlatanism almost destroyed the effect of all these advantages. He was a born comedian. He put forward his well-shaped foot, because the attitude had become a habit; he used exclamatory terms because they were a part of himself; he posed dramatically, because he had made that deportment his second nature. Such defects as these are not incompatible with a general benevolence and a certain quality of errant and purely ideal chivalry, which distinguishes the paladin from the knight. Canalis had not devotion enough for a Don Quixote, but he had too much elevation of thought not to put himself on the nobler side of questions and things. His poetry, which took the town by storm on all occasions, really injured the man as a poet; for he was not without mind, but his talent prevented him from developing it; he was overweighted by his reputation, while aiming to appear greater than it. Thus, as often happens, the man was entirely out of accord with the products of his thought. The author of these naïve, caressing, tender little lyrics, these calm idyls pure and cold as the surface of a lake, these verses so essentially feminine, was an ambitious little creature in a tightly buttoned frock-coat, with the air of a diplomat seeking political influence, redolent of the musk of aristocracy, full of pretension, thirsting for a fortune, in order to possess the income necessary to his ambition, already spoiled by a double success, the crowns of myrtle and of laurel. He had a Government situation worth eight thousand francs, three thousand francs' annuity from the literary fund, two thousand from the Academy, three thousand more from the paternal estate (less the taxes and the cost of

keeping it in order)—a total fixed income of fifteen thousand francs, plus the ten thousand brought in each year, on an average, by his poetry; in all twenty-five thousand francs. And all this was for Modeste's hero so precarious and insufficient an income that he usually spent from five to six thousand francs more every year; but the king's privy purse and the secret funds of the foreign office had hitherto supplied the deficit. He wrote a hymn for the king's coronation which earned him a whole silver service—having refused a sum of money on the ground that a Canalis owed his duty to the sovereign.

But about this time Canalis had, as the journalists say, exhausted his budget. He felt himself unable to invent any new form of poetry; his lyre did not have seven strings; it had only one; and having played on that one string so long, the public allowed him no other alternative than to hang himself with it, or to be silent. De Marsay, who did not like Canalis, made a remark whose poisoned shaft touched the poet to the quick of his vanity. "Canalis," he said, "always reminds me of that brave man whom Frederick the Great called up and commended after a battle because his trumpet had never ceased tooting its one little tune." Canalis desired to become a politician, and he made capital of a journey he had taken to Madrid as secretary to the embassy of the Duc de Chaulieu; though it was really made, according to Parisian gossip, in the capacity of "attaché to the duchess." How many times a sarcasm or a single speech has decided a man's life.

Colla, the late president of the Cisalpine republic, and the best lawyer in Piedmont, was told by a friend when he was forty years of age that he knew nothing of botany. He was piqued, became a second Jussieu, cultivated flowers, and compiled and published "The Flora of Piedmont," in Latin, the work of ten years. "I'll master De Marsay some of these days!" thought the crushed poet; "after all, Canning and Chateaubriand are both politicians."

Canalis would gladly have brought forth some great political work, but he was afraid of the French press, whose criticisms are savage upon any writer who takes four alexandrines to express one idea. Of all the poets of our day only three, Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and De Vigny, have been able to win the double glory of poet and prose-writer, like Racine and Voltaire, Molière and Rabelais — a rare distinction in the literature of France, which ought to give a man a right to the crowning title of poet.

The bard of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, therefore, was doing a wise thing in trying to shelter his little chariot beneath the protecting roof of the present government. When he became president of the court of Claims at the foreign office, he stood in need of a secretary—a friend who could take his place in various ways; cook up his interests with publishers, see to his glory in the newspapers, help him if need be in politics—in short, be his cat's-paw and satellite. In Paris many men of celebrity in art, science, and literature have one or more trainbearers, captains of the guard, chamberlains as it were, who live in the sunshine of their presence—aides-de-camp intrusted with delicate missions, permitting themselves to be compromised if necessary; toiling at the pedestal of the idol; not exactly his servants, nor yet his equals; bold in his defense, first in the breach, covering all retreats, occupied with his affairs, and devoted to him just so long as their illusions last, or until they have got all they wanted. Some of these satellites perceive a little ingratitude in their great man; others feel that they are simply made tools of; many weary of the life; very few remain contented with that sweet equality of feeling and sentiment which is the only reward that should be looked for in an intimacy with a superior man—a reward that contented Ali when Mohammed raised him to himself.

Many, misled by vanity, think themselves as capable as their patron. Pure devotion, such as Modeste conceived it, without money and without price, and more especially without hope, is rare.

Nevertheless there are Mennevals to be found, more perhaps in Paris than elsewhere, men who value a life in the background with its peaceful toil: Benedictines who have wandered into our social world, which offers them no monastery. These brave, meek hearts bear in their actions and in their hidden lives the poetry that writers express. They are poets themselves in soul, in tenderness, in their lonely and tender meditations—as truly poets as others of the name on paper, who fatten in the fields of literature at so much a verse; like Lord Byron, like all who live, alas! by ink, the Hippocrene water of to-day, for want of a better.

Attracted by the fame of Canalis, also by the prospect of political interest, and advised thereto by Madame d'Espard, who acted in the matter for the Duchesse de Chaulieu, a young lawyer of the court of Claims constituted himself gratuitous secretary to the poet, who welcomed and petted him very much as a broker caresses his first dabbler in the funds. The beginning of this companionship bore a very fair resemblance to friendship. The young man had already held the same relation to a minister, who went out of office in 1827, taking care before he did so to appoint his young secretary to a place in the foreign office. Ernest de la Brière, then about twenty-seven years of age, was decorated with the Legion of Honor but was without other means than his salary; he was accustomed to the management of business and had learned a good deal of life during his four years in a minister's cabinet. Kindly, amiable, and almost over-modest, with a heart full of pure and sound feelings, he was averse to putting himself in the foreground. He loved his country, and wished to serve her, but notoriety abashed him. To him the place of secretary to a Napoleon was far more desirable than that of prime minister. As soon as he became the friend and secretary of Canalis he did a great amount of labor for him, but by the end of eighteen months he recognized the barrenness of a nature that was poetic through literary expression only. The truth of the old proverb, "The gown does not make the monk," is eminently shown in literature. It is extremely rare to find among literary men a nature and a talent that are in perfect accord. The faculties are not the man himself. This disconnection, whose phenomena are amazing, proceeds from an unexplored, possibly an unexplorable mystery. The brain and its products of all kinds (for in art the hand of man is a continuation of his brain) are a world apart, which flourishes beneath the cranium in absolute independence of sentiments, feelings, and all virtue of citizens, fathers, and private life. This, however true, is not absolutely so; nothing is absolutely true of man. It is certain that a debauched man will dissipate his talent, that a drunkard will waste it in libations; while, on the other hand, no man can give himself talent by wholesome living: nevertheless it is all but proved that Virgil, the painter of Love, never loved a Dido, and that Rousseau, the model citizen, had enough pride to have furnished an entire aristocracy. On the other hand Raphael and Michael Angelo do present the glorious spectacle of genius in accord with character.

Talent in men is therefore, in all moral points, very much what beauty is in women—simply a promise. Let us, therefore, doubly admire the man in whom both heart and character equal the perfection of his genius.

When Ernest discovered beneath the poet an ambitious egoist, the worst species of egoist (for there are some amiable forms of the vice), he felt a delicacy in leaving him. Honest natures cannot easily break the ties that bind them, especially if they have been assumed voluntarily. The secretary was therefore still living in domestic relations with the poet when Modeste's letter arrived—in such relations, however, as involved a perpetual sacrifice of his feelings. La Brière admitted the frankness with which Canalis had laid himself bare before him. Moreover, the defects of the man, who will always be considered a great poet during his lifetime and flattered like Mar-

montel, were only the reverse side of his brilliant qualities. Without his vanity and his pretensions it is possible that he might never have acquired the sonorous diction which is so useful and even necessary an instrument in political life. His cold-bloodedness bordered upon rectitude and loyalty; his ostentation had a lining of generosity. Society profited by the results; the motives concerned God.

But when Modeste's letter arrived, Ernest deceived himself no longer as to Canalis. The pair had just finished breakfast and were talking together in the poet's study, which was on the ground-floor of a house standing back in a courtyard, and overlooked a garden.

"There!" exclaimed Canalis, "I was telling Madame de Chaulieu the other day that I ought to bring out another poem; I knew admiration was running short, for I have had no anonymous letters for a long time."

"Is it from an unknown woman?"

"Unknown? yes!—a D'Este, in Havre; evidently a feigned name."

Canalis passed the letter to La Brière. The little poem, with all its hidden enthusiasms, which was poor Modeste's heart, was disdainfully handed over, with the gesture of a spoiled dandy.

"It is a fine thing," said the lawyer, "to have the power to attract such feelings; to force a poor woman to step out of the habits which nature, education, and the world dictate to her, to break through conventions. What privileges genius wins! A letter such as this, written by a young girl—a genuine young girl—without hidden meanings, with real enthusiasm—"

"Well?" said Canalis.

"Why, a man might suffer as much as Tasso and yet feel recompensed," cried La Brière.

"That is all very well, my dear fellow, for a first letter of that kind, and even a second; but how about the thirtieth? And suppose you find out that these young enthusiasts are little jades? Imagine a poet rushing along the brilliant path in search of her, and finding at the end of it an old Englishwoman sitting on a mile-stone and offering you her hand! Or suppose this post-office angel should really be a rather ugly girl in quest of a husband? Ah, my boy! the effervescence then goes down."

"I begin to perceive," said La Brière, smiling, "that there is something poisonous in glory, as there is in certain dazzling flowers."

"And then," resumed Canalis, "all these women, even when they are simple-minded, have ideals, and one rarely answers to it. They never say to themselves that a poet is a vain man, as I am accused of being; they cannot conceive what it is for an author to be at the mercy of a feverish excitement, which makes him disagreeable and capricious; they want him to be always grand, always noble; it never occurs to them that genius is a disease, or that Nathan lives with Florine; that D'Arthèz is too fat, and Joseph Bridau is too thin; that Beranger limps, and that their own particular deity may have the snuffles! A Lucien de Rubempré, poet and cupid, is a phœnix. And why should I go in search of compliments only to pull the string of a shower-bath of cold looks from some disillusioned female?"

"Then the true poet," said La Brière, "ought to remain hidden, like God, in the center of his worlds, and be only seen in his own creations."

"Then glory would cost too dear," answered Canalis. "There is some good in life. As for that letter," he added, taking a cup of tea, "I assure you that when a noble and beautiful woman loves a poet she does not hide in the corner boxes, like a duchess in love with an actor; she feels herself sufficiently protected by her beauty, her fortune and her name to dare to say openly, like all epic poems: 'I am the nymph Calypso, enamored of Telemachus.' Mystery is the resource of little minds. For my part I no longer answer incognitos."

"How I should love a woman who came to seek me!" cried La Brière, with emotion. "To all you say I reply, my dear Canalis, that it cannot be an ordinary girl who aspires to a distinguished man; such a girl has too little trust, too

much vanity; she is too faint-hearted. Only a star, a—"

"—princess!" cried Canalis, bursting into a shout of laughter; "only a princess can descend to him. My dear fellow, that doesn't happen once in a hundred years. Such a love is like that flower that blossoms every century. Princesses, if they are young, rich, and beautiful, have something else to think of; they are surrounded, like all rare plants, by a hedge of fools, well-bred idiots as hollow as elder-bushes! My dream, alas! the crystal of my dream, garlanded from hence to the Corrèze with roses—ah! I cannot speak of it—it is in fragments at my feet, and has long been so. No, no, all anonymous letters are begging letters; and what sort chances! Write yourself to that young woman, if you suppose her young and pretty, and you'll find out. I can't reasonably be expected to love every woman; Apollo, at any rate he of Belvedere, is a delicate consumptive who must take care of his health."

"But when a woman writes to you in this way her excuse must be in her consciousness that she is able to eclipse in tenderness and beauty every other woman," said Ernest, "and I should think you might feel some curiosity—"

"Ah," said Canalis, "permit me, my juvenile friend, to abide by the beautiful duchess, who makes all my happiness."

"You are right, too right!" replied Ernest. However, the young secretary read and re-read Modeste's letter, striving to guess the mind of its hidden writer.

"There is not the least fine-writing here," he said, "she does not refer to genius; she speaks to your heart. This fragrance of modesty — this proposed agreement, would tempt me—"

"Sign it!" cried Canalis, laughing; "answer the letter and go to the end of the adventure yourself. You shall tell me the result three months hence—if the affair lasts so long."

Four days later Modeste received the following letter, written on extremely fine paper, protected by two envelopes, and sealed with the arms of Canalis.

"MADEMOISELLE—The admiration for fine works (allowing that my books are such) implies something so holy and sincere as to protect you from all light jesting, and to justify before the sternest judge the step you have taken in writing to me.

"But first I must thank you for the pleasure which such proofs of sympathy always afford, even though we may not merit them—for the maker of verses and the true poet are equally certain of the intrinsic worth of their writings — so readily does self-esteem lend itself to praise. The best proof of friendship that I can give to an unknown lady in exchange for a faith which allays the sting of criticism, is to share with her the harvest of my own experience, even at the risk of dispelling her most vivid illusions.

"Mademoiselle, the most beautiful crown for a young girl is the flower of a pure and saintly and irreproachable life. Are you alone in the world? If you are, there is no need to say more. But if you have a family, a father or a mother, think of all the grief that might come to them from such a letter as yours addressed to a poet whom you do not know personally. All writers are not angels; they have many defects. Some are frivolous, heedless, foppish, ambitious, dissipated; and, no matter how imposing innocence may be, nor how chivalrous the French poet, you will meet with many a degenerate troubadour in Paris ready to cultivate your affection only to betray it. By such a man your letter would be interpreted otherwise than it is by me. He would see a thought that is not in it, which you, in your innocence, have not suspected. There are as many natures as there are writers. I am deeply flattered that you have judged me capable of understanding you; but had you chanced to fall upon a hypocrite, a scoffer, one whose books may be melancholy while his life is a perpetual carnival, you would have found as the result of your generous imprudence an evil-minded man, the frequenter of green-rooms, perhaps the hero of some gay resort. In the bower of clematis where you dream of poets you

cannot smell the odor of the cigar which drives all poetry from the manuscript, any more than when, in making your toilet for the ball, you ornament yourself with the sparkling products of the jeweler's art, you can realize the strength of the workmen in the humble workshops where those radiant flowers of toil blossom forth into beauty.

"But let us look still further. How could the dreamy, solitary life you lead, doubtless by the seashore, interest a poet, whose mission it is to imagine all, since he must paint all? What reality can equal imagination? The young girls of the poets are so ideal that no living daughter of Eve can compete with them. And now tell me what will you gain—you, a young girl, brought up to be the virtuous mother of a family—if you learn to comprehend the terrible agitations of a poet's life in this dreadful capital, which may be defined by one sentence—the hell which men love.

"If the desire to brighten the monotonous existence of a curious young girl has led you to take your pen in hand and write to me, has not the step itself the appearance of degradation? What meaning am I to give to your letter? Are you one of a rejected caste, and do you seek a friend far away from you? Or, are you afflicted with personal ugliness, yet possessed of a noble soul which has no confidant? You have said too much, or too little. Either let us drop this correspondence, or, if you continue it, tell me more than in the letter you have now written me.

"But, mademoiselle, if you are young, if you are beautiful, if you have a home, a family, if in your heart you have the precious ointment, the spikenard, to pour out, as did Magdalene on the feet of Jesus, let yourself be won by a man worthy of you; become what every pure young girl should be—a good woman, the virtuous mother of a family. A poet is the saddest conquest that a girl can make; he has too much vanity, too many angles that will sharply wound a woman's proper pride, and kill a tenderness which has no experience of life. The wife of a poet should love him long before she marries him; she should train herself to the charity of angels, to their forbearance, to all the virtues of motherhood. Such qualities, mademoiselle, are but germs in a young girl.

"Listen to the whole truth—do I not owe it to you in return for your intoxicating flattery? If it is a glorious thing to marry a man who is celebrated, remember also that you must soon discover a superior man to be, in all essentials, like other men. He is therefore all the less likely to realize hopes, since prodigies are expected of him. He becomes like a woman whose beauty is overpraised, and of whom we say: 'I thought her far more lovely.' She has not warranted the portrait painted by the fairy to whom I owe your letter—the fairy whose name is Imagination.

"The qualities of the mind live and thrive only in an invisible sphere; the wife of a poet sees only their inconveniences; she sees the jewels manufactured, but she never wears them. If the glory of an exceptional position fascinates you, hear me now when I tell you that its pleasures are soon at an end. You will suffer when you find so many asperities in a nature which, from a distance, you thought equable, such coldness at a shining summit. Moreover, as women never set their feet within the world of real difficulties, they cease to appreciate what they once admired as soon as they think they see the inner mechanism of it.

"I close with a last thought, in which there is no disguised entreaty; it is the counsel of a friend. The exchange of souls can take place only between persons who are resolved to hide nothing from each other. Would you show yourself for such as you are to an unknown man? I dare not follow out the consequences of that idea.

"Deign to accept, mademoiselle, the homage which we owe to all women, even those who are disguised and masked."

So this was the letter she had worn between her flesh and her corset above her palpitating heart throughout one whole

day! For this she had postponed the reading until the midnight hour when the household slept, after having waited for the solemn silence with the eager anxiety of an imagination on fire! For this she had blessed the poet, and had read in imagination a thousand letters ere she opened one—fancying all things, except this drop of cold water falling upon the vaporous forms of her illusion, and dissolving them as prussic acid dissolves life. There was nothing to do but to hide herself in her bed, blow out her candle, bury her face in the sheets and weep!

All this happened during the first days of July. Modeste presently got up, walked across the room and opened the window. She wanted air. The fragrance of the flowers came up to her with that freshness of odor peculiar to flowers in the night. The sea, lighted by the moon, sparkled like a mirror. A nightingale was singing in a tree in Vilquin's park. "Ah, there is the poet!" thought Modeste, her anger at once subsiding. Bitter reflections chased each other through her mind. She was cut to the quick; she wanted to re-read the letter, and lit a candle; she studied the carefully composed sentences; and heard in them at last the voice of the outer world.

"He is right, and I am wrong," she said to herself. "But who could ever believe that under the starry mantle of a poet I should find nothing but one of Molière's old men?"

When a woman or young girl makes an error of good taste, she conceives a deadly hatred to the witness, the author, or the object of her fault. And so the true, the natural, the untamed Modeste conceived within her soul an unquenchable desire to fling herself against that righteous spirit, to drive it into some fatal inconsistency, and so return blow for blow. This pure child, whose head alone had been misguided—partly by her reading, partly by her sister's sorrows, and more perhaps by the dangerous meditations of her solitary life—was suddenly surprised by the flickering of a ray of sunshine across her face. She had been standing for three hours on the shores of the vast sea of Doubt. Nights like these are never forgotten. Modeste walked straight to her little Chinese table, a gift from her father, and wrote a letter dictated by the spirit of vengeance which palpitates in the hearts of young girls.

VIII.

"*To Monsieur de Canalis:*

"MONSIEUR—You are certainly a great poet, and you are something more—an honest man. After showing such loyal frankness to a young girl who was upon the verge of an abyss, have you enough left to answer without hypocrisy or evasion the following question?

"Would you have written the letter I now hold in answer to mine—would your ideas, your language have been the same—had some one whispered in your ear (what may be true), Mademoiselle O. d'Este M. has six millions and does not intend to have a fool for a master?

"Admit the supposition for a moment. Be with me what you are with yourself; fear nothing. I am wiser than my twenty years; nothing that is frank can hurt you in my mind. When I have read your confidence, if you deign to make it, you shall receive from me an answer to your first letter.

"Having admired your talent, often so sublime, permit me to do homage to your delicacy and your integrity, which force me to remain always,

"Your humble servant,

"O. D'ESTE M."

When Ernest de la Brière had read this letter he went to walk along the boulevards, tossed in mind like a tiny vessel by a tempest when the wind is blowing from all points of the compass. An ordinary young man, a true Parisian, would have settled the matter in a single phrase, "The girl is a little hussy." But for a youth whose soul was noble and true, this attempt to put him upon his

oath, this appeal to truth, had the power to awaken the three judges hidden in the conscience of every man. Honor, Truth, and Justice, getting on their feet, cried out in their several ways energetically.

"Ah, my dear Ernest," said Truth, "you never would have read that lesson to a rich heiress. No, my boy; you would have gone in hot haste to Havre to find out if the girl were handsome, and you would have been very unhappy indeed at her preference for genius; and if you could have tripped up your friend and taken his place in her affections, Mademoiselle d'Este would have been a divinity."

"What?" cried Justice, "are you not always bemoaning yourselves, you penniless men of wit and capacity, that rich girls marry beings whom you wouldn't take as your servants. You rail against the materialism of the century which hastens to unite wealth to wealth, and never marries some fine young man with brains and no money to a rich girl. Here is one who revolts against that very spirit of the age, and behold! the poet replies with a blow at her heart!"

"Rich or poor, young or old, ugly or handsome, the girl is right; she has a mind of her own; she has tripped the poet into the slough of self-interest," cried Honor. "She deserves an answer, a sincere and noble and frank answer, and, above all, the honest expression of your thought. Examine yourself! sound your heart and purge it of its cowardice. What would Molière's Alceste say?"

And La Brière, who had started from the Boulevard Poissonière, walked so slowly, absorbed in these reflections, that he was more than an hour in reaching the Boulevard des Capucines. Then he followed the quays, which led him to the Cour des Comptes, situated at that time close to the Sainte-Chapelle. Instead of beginning on his accounts, he remained at the mercy of his perplexities.

"One thing is evident," he said to himself; "she hasn't six millions; but that's not the point—"

Six days later, Modeste received the following letter:

"MADEMOISELLE—You are not a D'Este. The name is a feigned one to conceal your own. Do I owe the revelations which you solicit to a person who is untruthful about herself? Question for question: Are you of an illustrious family? or a noble family? or a middle-class family? Undoubtedly morality cannot change, it is the same everywhere; but its obligations vary in different states of life. Just as the sun lights up a scene diversely and produces differences which we admire, so does morality conform social duty to rank, to position. The peccadillo of a soldier is a crime in a general, and vice versa. Observances are not the same for the gleaner in the field, for the girl who sews at fifteen sous a day, for the daughter of a petty shopkeeper, for the young bourgeoise, for the child of a rich merchant, for the heiress of a noble family, for a daughter of the house of Este. A king must not stoop to pick up a piece of gold, but a laborer ought to retrace his steps to find ten sous; though both are equally bound to obey the laws of economy. A daughter of Este, who is worth six millions, has the right to wear a broad-brimmed hat and plume, to flourish her whip, use the spur, and ride like an amazon decked in gold lace, followed by lackeys, into the presence of a poet and say: 'I love poetry; and I would fain expiate Leonora's cruelty to Tasso!' but a daughter of the people would cover herself with ridicule by imitating her. To what class do you belong? Answer sincerely, and I will answer the question you have put to me.

"As I have not the honor of knowing you personally, and yet am bound to you, in a measure, by the ties of poetic communion, I am unwilling to offer you any commonplace compliments. Perhaps you have already won a malicious victory by thus embarrassing a maker of books."

The young man was certainly not wanting in the sort of shrewdness which is permissible to a man of honor. By return mail he received an answer:

"TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS—You grow more and more sensible, my dear poet.

My father is a count. The chief glory of our house was a cardinal, in the days when cardinals walked the earth by the side of kings. I am the last of our family, but I have the necessary quarterings to make my entry into any court or chapter-house in Europe. We are quite the equals of the Canalis. You will be kind enough to excuse me from sending you our arms.

"Endeavor to reply as truthfully as I have done. I await your response to know if I can then sign myself as I do now,

"Your servant, O. D'ESTE M."

"The little mischief! how she abuses her privileges," cried La Brière; "but is she frank?"

No young man can be four years private secretary to a cabinet minister, and live in Paris and observe the carrying on of many intrigues, with perfect impunity; the purest soul is more or less intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of the imperial city. Happy in the thought that he was not Canalis, our young secretary engaged a place in the mail-coach for Havre, after writing a letter in which he announced that the promised answer would be sent on a certain day—excusing the delay on the ground of the importance of the confession and the pressure of his duties at the ministry.

He took care to get from the director-general of the post-office a note to the postmaster at Havre, requesting secrecy and attention to his wishes. Ernest was thus enabled to see Françoise Crochet when she came for the letters, and to follow her without exciting observation. Guided by her, he reached Ingouville and saw Modeste Mignon at the window of the Chalet.

"Well, Françoise?" he heard the young girl say: to which the maid responded:

"Yes, mademoiselle, I have one."

Struck by the girl's great beauty, Ernest retraced his steps and asked a man on the street the name of the owner of the magnificent estate.

"That?" said the man, nodding to the villa.

"Yes, my friend."

"Oh, that belongs to Monsieur Vilquin, the richest shipping merchant in Havre, a man so rich he doesn't know what he is worth."

"There is no Cardinal Vilquin that I know of in history," thought Ernest, as he walked back to Havre to return to Paris. Naturally he questioned the postmaster about the Vilquin family, and learned that it possessed an enormous fortune. Monsieur Vilquin had a son and two daughters, one of whom was married to Monsieur Althor, junior. Prudence kept La Brière from seeming anxious about the Vilquins; the postmaster was already looking at him suspiciously.

"Is there any one staying with them at the present moment," he asked, "besides the family?"

"The D'Hérouville family is there just now. They do talk of a marriage between the young duke and the youngest Mademoiselle Vilquin."

"There was a celebrated Cardinal d'Hérouville under the Valois," thought Ernest, "and a terrible marshal whom they made a duke in the time of Henry IV."

Ernest returned to Paris having seen enough of Modeste to dream of her, and to think that, whether she were rich or whether she were poor, if she had a noble soul he would like to make her Madame de la Brière; and he resolved to continue the correspondence.

Ah! you poor women of France, try to remain hidden if you can; try to weave the least little romance about your lives in the midst of a civilization which posts in the public streets the hours when the coaches arrive and depart; which counts the letters and stamps them twice over, first with the precise moment when they are thrown into the boxes, and next when they are distributed; which numbers the houses, prints the tax of each tenant on a metal register at the doors (after verifying its particulars), and which will soon possess one vast register of every inch of its territory down to the smallest parcel of land, and the most insignificant features of it—a giant work ordained by a

giant. Try, imprudent young ladies, to escape not only the eye of the police, but the incessant chatter which takes place in a country town about the veriest trifles —which counts how many dishes the prefect has at his dessert, how many slices of melon are left at the door of some small householder, which listens to catch the chink of the gold a thrifty man lays by, and spends its evenings in calculating the incomes of the village and the town and the department. It was mere chance that enabled Modeste to escape discovery through Ernest's reconnoitering expedition—a step for which he was already reproaching himself; but what Parisian wants to be the dupe of a little country girl? Incapable of being duped! that maxim is the dissolvent of all noble sentiments in man.

We can readily guess the struggle of feeling to which this honest young fellow fell a prey when we read the letter that he now indited, in which every stroke of the flail which scourged his conscience will be found to have left its trace.

This is what Modeste read a few days later, as she sat by her window on a fine summer's day:

"MADEMOISELLE—Without hypocrisy, *yes*, if I had been certain that you possessed an immense fortune I should have acted differently. Why? I have searched for the reason; here it it. We have within us an inborn feeling, inordinately developed by social life, which drives us to the pursuit and to the possession of happiness. Most men confound happiness with the means that lead to it; money is in their eyes the chief element of happiness. I should, therefore, have endeavored to please you, prompted by that social sentiment which has in all ages made wealth a religion. At least, I think I should. It is not to be expected of a man still young that he can have the wisdom which substitutes good sense for the pleasure of the senses; within sight of a prey the brutal instinct hidden in the heart of man drives him on. Instead of a lesson, I should have sent you compliments and flatteries. Should I have kept my own esteem in so doing? I doubt it. Mademoiselle, in such a case success brings absolution; but happiness? that is another thing. Should I have distrusted my wife had I won her in that way? Most assuredly I should. Your advance to me would sooner or later have come between us. Your husband, however grand your fancy might have him, would have ended by reproaching you for having abased him. You, yourself, might have come, sooner or later, to despise him. The strong man forgives, but the poet laments. Such, mademoiselle, is the answer which my honesty compels me to make to you.

"And now, listen to me. You have the triumph of forcing me to reflect deeply—first upon you, whom I do not sufficiently know; next upon myself, of whom I knew too little. You have had the power to stir up many of the evil thoughts which crouch in all hearts; but from them something good and generous in me has come forth, and I greet you with my most fervent benedictions, just as at sea we hail the lighthouse which shows the rocks on which we were about to perish. Here is my confession, for I would not lose your esteem nor my own for all the treasures of earth.

"I wished to know who you were. I have just returned from Havre, where I saw Francoise Cochet, and followed her to Ingouville. You are as beautiful as the woman of a poet's dream; but I do not know whether you are Mademoiselle Vilquin concealed under Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, or Mademoiselle d'Hérouville hidden under Mademoiselle Vilquin. Though all is fair in war, I blushed at such spying and stopped short in my inquiries. You have roused my curiosity; forgive me for being somewhat of a woman; it is, I believe, the privilege of a poet.

"Now that I have laid bare my heart and allowed you to read it, you will believe in the sincerity of what I am about to add. Though the glimpse I had of you was all too rapid, it has sufficed to modify my opinion of your conduct. You are a poet and a poem, even more than you are

a woman. Yes, there is in you something more precious than beauty; you are the beautiful Ideal of art, of fancy. The step you took, blamable as it would be in an ordinary young girl, allotted to an every-day destiny, has another aspect in one endowed with the nature which I now attribute to you. Among the crowd of beings flung by fate into the social life of this planet to make up a generation, there are exceptional ones. If your letter is the outcome of long poetic reveries on the destiny which conventionality reserves for women, if, constrained by the impulse of a lofty and intelligent mind, you have wished to understand the life of a man to whom you attribute the gift of genius, to the end that you may create a friendship withdrawn from the ordinary relations of life, with a soul in communion with your own, disregarding thus the ordinary trammels of your sex — then, assuredly, you are an exception. The law which serves to measure the actions of the crowd is too limited for you. But in that case, the remark in my first letter returns in greater force—you have done too much or not enough.

"Accept once more my thanks for the service you have rendered me, that of compelling me to sound my heart. You have corrected in me the false idea, only too common in France, that marriage should be a means of fortune. While I struggled with my conscience a sacred voice spoke to me. I swore solemnly to make my fortune myself, and not be led by motives of cupidity in choosing the companion of my life. I have also sought to repress the blamable curiosity you have excited in me. You have not six millions. There is no concealment possible in Havre for a young lady who possesses such a fortune; you would be discovered at once by the pack of hounds of great families whom I see in Paris on the hunt after heiresses, and who have already sent one, the grand equerry, the young duke, among the Vilquins. Therefore, believe me, the sentiments I have now expressed are fixed in my mind as a rule of life, from which I have abstracted all influences of romance or of actual fact.

"Prove to me, therefore, that you have one of those souls which may be forgiven for its disobedience to the common law, by perceiving and comprehending the spirit of this letter as you did that of my first letter. If you are destined to a middle-class life, obey the iron law which holds society together. As a superior woman, I admire you; but if you seek to obey an impulse which you ought to repress, I pity you. The all-wise moral of that great domestic epic 'Clarissa Harlowe' is that legitimate and honorable love led the poor victim to her ruin because it was conceived, developed, and pursued beyond the boundaries of family restraint. The family, however cruel and even foolish it may be, is in the right against the Lovelaces. The family is Society. Believe me, the glory of a young girl, of a woman, must always be that of repressing her most ardent impulses within the narrow sphere of conventionality. If I had a daughter able to become a Madame de Staël, I should wish her dead at fifteen. Can you imagine a daughter of yours flaunting on the stage of fame, exhibiting herself to win the plaudits of a crowd, and not suffer anguish at the thought? No matter to what heights a woman can rise by the inward poetry of her soul, she must sacrifice the outer signs of superiority on the altar of her home. Her impulse, her genius, her aspirations toward the good and the sublime, the whole poem of a young girl's being, should belong to the man she accepts, and the children whom she will bring into the world. I think I perceive in you a secret desire to widen the narrow circle of the life to which all women are condemned, and to put love and passion into marriage. Ah! it is a beautiful dream! it is not impossible; it is difficult, but if realized, may it not be to the despair of souls who are—forgive me the hackneyed word—misunderstood?

"If you seek a platonic friendship it will be to your sorrow in after years. If your letter was a jest, discontinue it. This little romance is to end here—is it not? It has not been without fruit. My sense of honesty is aroused, and you, on

your side, will have learned something of social life. Turn your thoughts to real life; throw the enthusiasms you have culled from literature into the virtues of your sex.

"Adieu, mademoiselle. Do me the honor to grant me your esteem. Having seen you, or one whom I believe to be you, I have known that your letter was simply natural; a flower so lovely turns to the sun—of poetry. Love poetry as you love flowers, music, the grandeur of the sea, the beauties of nature; love it as an adornment of the soul, but remember what I have had the honor of telling you as to the nature of poets. Take care not to marry, as you say, a fool, but seek carefully the partner whom God has made for you. There are souls, believe me, who are fit to appreciate you, and to make you happy. If I were rich, if you were poor, I would lay my heart and my fortune at your feet some day; for I believe your soul to be full of riches and of loyalty; to you I could confide my life and my honor in absolute security.

"Once more, adieu, fairest daughter of Eve the fair."

The reading of this letter, swallowed like a drop of water in the desert, lifted the mountain which weighed heavily on Modeste's heart; then she saw the mistake she had made in arranging her plan, and repaired it by giving Francoise some envelopes directed to herself, and telling her not to come to the Chalet again. Henceforth Francoise, after returning to her own house, could put the letters which came from Paris into these envelopes, and post them again, secretly. Modeste resolved to receive the postman herself on the steps of the Chalet at the hour when he made his delivery.

As to the feelings that this reply, in which the noble heart of poor La Brière beat beneath the brilliant phantom of Canalis, excited in Modeste, they were as multifarious and confused as the waves which rushed to die along the shore while, with her eyes fixed on the wide ocean, she gave herself up to the joy of having (if we dare say so) harpooned an angelic soul in the Parisian sea; of having divined that hearts of price might sometimes be found in harmony with genius, and, above all, for having followed the magic voice of intuition.

A vast interest was now about to animate her life. The wires of her cage were broken. Her thoughts took wings.

"Oh, father!" she cried, looking out to the horizon. "Come back and make us very rich."

The answer which Ernest de la Brière received five days later will tell the reader more than any elaborate disquisition of ours.

IX.

"To Monsieur de Canalis:

"My Friend—Suffer me to give you that name—you have delighted me; I would not have you other than you are in this letter, the first—oh, may it not be the last! Who but a poet could have excused and understood a young girl so delicately?

"I wish to speak to you with the sincerity that dictated the opening lines of your letter. And first, let me say that fortunately you do not know me at all. I can joyfully assure you that I am neither that hideous Mademoiselle Vilquin nor the very noble and withered Mademoiselle d'Hérouville who floats between twenty and forty years of age, unable to decide on a satisfactory date. The Cardinal d'Hérouville flourished in the history of the Church at least a century before the cardinal of whom we boast as our only family glory—for I take no account of lieutenant-generals, and abbés who write trumpery little verses.

"Moreover, I do not live in the magnificent villa Vilquin; there is not in my veins, thank God, the ten-millionth of a drop of that chilly blood which flows behind a counter. I come on one side from Germany, on the other from the south of France; my mind has a Teutonic love of reverie, my blood the vivacity of Provence. I am noble, both on my father's and on

my mother's side. On my mother's I derive from every page of the Almanach de Gotha. In short, my precautions are well taken. It is not in any man's power, nor even in the power of the law, to unmask my incognito. I shall remain veiled, unknown.

"As to my person and as to my 'belongings,' as the Normans say, make yourself easy. I am at least as handsome as the little girl (ignorantly happy) who attracted your notice, and I do not call myself poverty-stricken; although ten sons of peers may not accompany me in my walks. I have seen the humiliating comedy of the heiress adored for her millions played on my account. In short, make no attempt, even on a wager, to reach me. Alas! though free as air, I am watched and guarded—by myself, in the first place, and secondly, by people of nerve and courage who would not hesitate to put a knife in your heart if you tried to penetrate my retreat. I do not say this to excite your courage or stimulate your curiosity; I believe I have no need of such incentives to interest you and attach you to me.

"I will now reply to the second edition, considerably enlarged, of your first sermon.

"Will you have a confession? I said to myself when I saw you so distrustful, and mistaking me for Corinne (whose improvisations bore me dreadfully), that in all probability dozens of Muses had already led you, rashly curious, into their valleys, and begged you to taste the fruits of their boarding-school Parnassus. Oh! you are perfectly safe with me, my friend; I may love poetry, but I have no little verses in my pocket-book, and my stockings are, and will remain, immaculately white. You shall not be pestered by 'slight pieces' in one or more volumes. And, finally, should it ever happen that I say to you the word 'Come!' you will not find—you know it now—an old maid, poor and ugly.

"Ah! my friend, if you only knew how I regret that you came to Havre! You have lowered the charm of what you call my romance. God alone knew the treasure I was reserving for the man noble enough, and trusting enough, and perspicacious enough to come—having faith in my letters, having penetrated step by step into the depths of my heart—to come to our first meeting with the simplicity of a child: for that was what I dreamed to be the innocence of a man of genius. And now you have spoiled my treasure! But I forgive you; you live in Paris and, as you say, there is always a man within a poet.

"Because I tell you this will you think me some little girl who cultivates an enchanted garden full of illusions? Do not amuse yourself by throwing stones into the broken windows of a long-ruined chateau. You, who are witty and wise, have you not guessed that when Mademoiselle d'Este received your pedantic lesson she said to herself: 'No, dear poet, my first letter was not the pebble which a vagabond child flings about the highway to frighten the owner of the adjacent fruit-trees, but a net carefully and prudently thrown by a fisherman seated on a rock above the sea, hoping for a miraculous draught.'

"All that you say so beautifully about the family has my approval. The man who is able to please me, and of whom I believe myself worthy, will have my heart and my life—with the consent of my parents, for I will neither grieve them, nor take them unawares: happily, I am certain of reigning over them; and, besides, they are wholly without prejudices. Indeed, in every way, I feel myself protected against any delusions in my dream. I have built the fortress with my own hands, and I have allowed it to be fortified by the boundless devotion of those who watch over me as if I were a treasure—not that I am unable to defend myself in the open, if need be; for, let me say, circumstances have furnished me with well-tempered armor on which is engraved the word 'Disdain.' I have the deepest horror of all that is calculating—of all that is not pure, disinterested, and wholly noble. I worship the beautiful, the ideal, without being romantic; though I *have* been, in my heart of hearts,

in my dreams. But I recognize the truth of the various things, just even to vulgarity, which you have written me about Society and social life.

"For the time being we are, and we can only be, two friends. Why seek an unseen friend? you ask. Your person may be unknown to me, but your mind, your heart I *know;* they please me, and I feel an infinitude of thoughts within my soul which need a man of genius for their confidant. I do not wish the poem of my heart to be wasted; I would have it known to you as it is to God. What a precious thing is a true comrade, one to whom we can tell all! You will surely not reject the unpublished leaflets of a young girl's thoughts when they fly to you like the pretty insects fluttering to the sun? I am sure you have never before met with this good fortune of the soul—the honest confidences of an honest girl. Listen to her prattle; accept the music that she has heretofore sung only to herself. Later, if our souls are sisters, if our characters warrant the attempt, some day a white-haired old serving-man shall await you by the wayside and lead you to the cottage, the villa, the castle, the palace—I don't yet know what sort of bower it will be, nor what its color, nor whether this conclusion will ever be possible; but you will admit, will you not? that it is poetic, and that Mademoiselle d'Este has something in her. Has she not left you free? Has she gone with jealous feet to watch you in the salons of Paris? Has she imposed upon you the labors of some high emprise, such as paladins sought voluntarily in the olden time? No, she asks a purely spiritual and mystic alliance. Come to me when you are unhappy, wounded, weary. Tell me all, hide nothing; I shall have balms for all your ills. I am twenty years of age, dear friend, but I have the sense of fifty, and unfortunately I have known through the experience of another all the horrors and the delights of love. I know what baseness, what infamy, the human heart can contain; yet I myself am the most honest of girls. No, I have no illusions; but I have something better, something real—I have beliefs and a religion. See! I open the game of our confidences.

"Whomsoever I marry—provided I choose him for myself—may sleep in peace or go to the East Indies, sure that he will find me on his return working at the tapestry which I began before he left me; and in every stitch he shall read a verse of the poem of which he has been the hero. Yes, I have resolved within my heart never to follow my husband where he does not wish me to go. I will be the divinity of his hearth. That is my religion of humanity. But why should I not test and choose the man to whom I am to be as the life to the body? Is a man ever impeded by life? What can that woman be who thwarts the man she loves?—It is illness, not life. By life, I mean that joyous health which makes each hour a pleasure.

"But to return to your letter, which will always be precious to me. Yes, jesting apart, it contains that which I desired, an expression of prosaic sentiments which are as necessary to family life as air to the lungs: and without which no happiness is possible. To act as an honest man, to think as a poet, to love as women love, that is what I wished for in my friend, and it is now no longer a chimera.

"Adieu, my friend. I am poor at this moment. That is one of the reasons why I cling to my concealment, my mask, my impregnable fortress. I have read your last verses in the 'Revue'—ah! with what delight, now that I am initiated in the austere and secret grandeur of your soul.

"Will it make you unhappy to know that a young girl prays for you; that you are her solitary thought—without a rival except in her father and her mother? Can there be any reason why you should reject these pages full of you, written for you, seen by no eye but yours? Send me their counterpart. I am so little of a woman yet that your confidences—provided they are full and true—will suffice for the happiness of your

"O. d'Este M."

"Good heavens! can I be in love already?" cried the young secretary, when he perceived that he had held this letter in his hands more than an hour after reading it. "What shall I do? She thinks she is writing to the great poet! Can I continue the deception? Is she a woman of forty, or a girl of twenty?"

Ernest was now fascinated by the great gulf of the unknown. The unknown is the obscurity of infinitude, and nothing is more alluring. In that somber vastness fires flash, and furrow and color the abyss with fancies like those of Martynn. For a busy man like Canalis, an adventure of this kind is swept away like a harebell by a mountain torrent, but in the more unoccupied life of the young secretary, this charming girl, whom his imagination persistently connected with the blonde beauty at the window, remained in his heart, and did as much mischief in his regulated life as a fox in a poultry-yard. Ernest allowed himself to be greatly preoccupied by this mysterious correspondent; and he answered her last letter with another, a pretentious and carefully studied epistle, in which, however, passion began to reveal itself in spite of him.

"MADEMOISELLE—Is it quite loyal in you to enthrone yourself in the heart of a poor poet with a latent intention of abandoning him if he is not exactly what you wish, bequeathing him endless regrets—showing him for a moment an image of perfection, were it only assumed, and at any rate giving him a foretaste of happiness? I was very short-sighted in soliciting this letter, in which you have begun to unfold the elegant fabric of your thoughts. A man can easily become enamored with a mysterious unknown who combines such fearlessness with such originality, so much imagination with so much feeling. Who would not wish to know you after reading your first confidence? It requires a strong effort on my part to retain my senses in thinking of you, for you combine all that can trouble the head or the heart of man. I therefore make the most of the little self-possession you have left me to offer you my humble remonstrances.

"Do you really believe, mademoiselle, that letters, more or less true in relation to the life of the writers, more or less insincere—for those which we write to each other are the expressions of the moment at which we pen them, and not of the general tenor of our lives—do you believe, I say, that however beautiful they may be, they can at all replace the representation that we could make of ourselves to each other by the revelations of daily intercourse? Man is dual. There is a life invisible, that of the heart, to which letters may suffice; and there is a life material, to which more importance is, alas, attached than one would believe at your age. These two existences must, however, be made to harmonize in the ideal which you cherish; and this, I may remark in passing, is very rare.

"The pure, spontaneous, disinterested homage of a solitary soul which is both educated and chaste, is one of those celestial flowers whose color and fragrance console for every grief, for every wound, for every betrayal which makes up the life of a literary man; and I thank you with an impulse equal to your own. But after this poetical exchange of my griefs for the pearls of your charity, what do you expect? I have neither the genius nor the splendid position of Lord Byron; above all, I have not the halo of his fictitious damnation and his false social woes. But what could you have hoped from him in like circumstances? His friendship? Well, he who ought to have felt only pride was eaten up by a sickly, irritable vanity which discouraged friendship. I, a thousand-fold more insignificant than he, may I not have discordances of character which make life unpleasant, and render friendship a burden heavy indeed to bear? In exchange for your reveries, what would you gain? The dissatisfactions of a life which would not be wholly yours. The compact is madness.

"Let me tell you why. In the first place, your projected poem is a plagiarism. A young German girl, who was not, like

you, semi-German, but altogether so, adored Goethe with the rash intoxication of her twenty years. She made him her friend, her religion, her god, knowing at the same time that he was married. Madame Goethe, a worthy German woman, lent herself to this worship with a sly good-nature which did not cure Bettina. But what was the end of it all? The young ecstatic married a man who was younger and handsomer than Goethe. Now, between ourselves, let us admit that a young girl who should make herself the handmaid of a man of genius, his equal through comprehension, and should piously worship him till death, like one of those divine figures sketched by the masters on the shutters of their mystic chapels, and who, when Germany lost him, should have retired to some solitude away from men, like the friend of Lord Bolingbroke—let us admit, I say, that that young girl would have lived forever, inlaid in the glory of the poet as Mary Magdalene in the cross and triumph of our Lord. If that is sublime, what say you to the reverse of the picture? As I am neither Goethe nor Lord Byron, the colossi of poetry and egotism, but simply the author of a few esteemed verses, I cannot expect the honors of a cult. I am not disposed to be a martyr. I have ambition, and I have a heart; I am still young and I have my career to make. See me for what I am. The bounty of the king and the protection of his ministers give me sufficient means of living. I have the outward bearing of a very ordinary man. I go to the soirées in Paris, like any other empty-headed fop; but in a carriage whose wheels do not rest upon a foundation which is solidified, as the present times demand, by property invested in the funds. But if I am not rich, neither do I have the reliefs and consolations of life in a garret, the toil uncomprehended, the fame in penury, which belong to men who are worth far more than I—D'Arthèz, for instance.

"Ah! what prosaic conclusions will your young enthusiasm find to these enchanting visions. Let us stop here. If I have had the happiness of seeming to you a terrestrial paragon, you have been to me a thing of light and a beacon, like those stars that shine for a moment and disappear. May nothing ever tarnish this episode of our lives. Were we to continue it I might love you; I might conceive one of those mad passions which rend all obstacles, which light fires in the heart whose violence is greater than their duration. And suppose I succeeded in pleasing you? we should end our tale in the common vulgar way—marriage, a household, children, Bélise and Henriette Chrysale together!—could it be? Therefore, adieu."

X.

"*To Monsieur de Canalis:*

"MY FRIEND—Your letter gives me as much pain as pleasure. But perhaps we shall soon find nothing but pleasure in writing to each other. Understand me thoroughly. The soul speaks to God and asks him for many things; he is mute. I seek to obtain in you the answers that God does not make to me. Cannot the friendship of Mademoiselle de Gournay and Montaigne be revived in us? Do you not remember the household of Sismonde de Sismondi in Geneva? The loveliest home ever known, as I have been told; something like that of the Marquis de Pescaire and his wife, who were happy to old age. Is it impossible that two hearts, two harps, should exist as in a symphony, answering each other from a distance, vibrating with delicious melody in unison? Man alone of all creation is in himself the harp, the musician, and the listener. Do you think to find me uneasy and jealous like ordinary women? I know that you go into the world and meet the handsomest and the wittiest women in Paris. May I not suppose that some one of those mermaids has deigned to clasp you in her cold and scaly arms, and that she has inspired the answer whose prosaic opinions sadden me? There is something in life more beautiful than these flowers of Parisian coquetry; there grows a blossom

far up those Alpine peaks called men of genius, the glory of humanity, which they fertilize with the dews their lofty heads draw from the skies. I seek to cultivate that flower and make it bloom; for its wild yet gentle fragrance can never fail—it is eternal.

"Do me the honor to believe that there is nothing low or commonplace in me. Were I Bettina, for I know to whom you allude, I should never have become Madame von Arnim; and had I been one of Lord Byron's many loves, I should be at this moment in a cloister. You have touched me to the quick. You do not know me, but you shall know me. I feel within me something that is sublime, of which I dare speak without vanity. God has put into my soul the roots of that Alpine flower born on the summits of which I speak, and I will plant it in an earthen-pot upon my window-sill and see it die. No, that glorious flower-cup, single in its beauty, intoxicating in its fragrance, shall not be dragged through the vulgarities of life! it is yours—yours, before any eye has blighted it, yours forever! Yes, my poet, all my thoughts are yours, the most secret, the most foolish ones, even; my heart is yours without reserve and with its infinite affection. If you should personally not please me, I shall never marry. I can live the life of the heart, I can exist on your mind, your sentiments; they please me, and I will always be what I am, your friend. Yours is a noble moral nature; I have recognized it, I have appreciated it, and that suffices me. In that is all my future. Do not laugh at a young and pretty handmaiden who shrinks not from the thought of being some day the old companion of a poet—a sort of mother perhaps, or a housekeeper; the guide of his judgment and a source of his wealth. This handmaiden—so devoted, so precious to the lives of such as you—is pure, disinterested friendship, to whom you will tell all, who listens and sometimes shakes her head; who knits by the light of the lamp and watches until the poet shall return home soaked with rain, or vexed in mind.

"Such shall be my destiny if I do not have that of a happy wife attached forever to her husband; I smile alike at either fate. Do you believe France will be any the worse if Mademoiselle d'Este does not give it two or three sons, and never becomes a Madame Vilquin-something-or-other? As for me, I shall never be an old maid. I shall make myself a mother, by taking care of others and by my secret co-operation in the existence of a great man, to whom also I shall carry all my thoughts and all my earthly efforts.

"I have the deepest horror of commonplaceness. If I am free, if I am rich (and I know that I am young and pretty), I will never belong to some idiot, just because he is the son of a peer of France, nor to a merchant who could ruin himself and me in a day, nor to a handsome creature who would be the woman of the household, nor to a man of any kind who would make me blush twenty times a day for being his. Make yourself easy on that point. My father adores my wishes; he will never oppose them. If I please my poet, and he pleases me, the glorious structure of our love shall be built so high as to be inaccessible to any kind of misfortune. I am an eaglet; and you will see it in my eyes.

"I shall not repeat what I have already said, but I will put its substance in the least possible number of words, and confess to you that I should be the happiest of women if I were imprisoned by love as I am now imprisoned by the wish and will of a father. Ah! my friend, let us reduce to the truth the romance that has come to us through the first exercise of my will:—

"A young girl, with a lively imagination, locked up in a tower, is weary with longing to run loose in the park where her eyes only are allowed to rove. She invents a way to loosen her bars; she jumps from the casement; she scales the park wall; she frolics along the neighbor's sward—it is the eternal comedy. Well, that young girl is my soul, the neighbor's park is your genius. Is it not all very natural? Was there ever a neighbor who would complain of the pretty

feet that broke down his trellises? So much for the poet.

"But does the lofty reasoner after the fashion of Molière want still better reasons? Well, here they are. My dear Geronte, marriages are usually made in defiance of common-sense. Parents make inquiries about a young man. If the Leander—who is supplied by some friend, or caught in a ball-room—is not a thief, and has no visible rent in his reputation, if he has the necessary fortune, if he comes from a college or a law-school and so fulfills the popular ideas of education, and if he wears his clothes with a gentlemanly air, he is allowed to meet the young lady, whose mother has ordered her to guard her tongue, to let no sign of her heart or soul appear on her face, which must wear the smile of a danseuse finishing a pirouette. These commands are coupled with instructions as to the danger of revealing her real character, and the additional advice of not seeming alarmingly well educated. If the settlements have all been agreed upon, the parents are good-natured enough to let the pair get acquainted during the rare moments when they are left alone together; they talk or walk together, but always without the slightest freedom, for they know that they are already bound. The man is as much dressed up in soul as he is in body, and so is the young girl. This pitiable comedy, mixed with bouquets, jewels, and theater-parties is called "paying one's addresses." It revolts me: I desire that actual marriage shall be the result of a previous and long marriage of souls. A young girl, a woman, has throughout her life only this one moment when reflection, second sight, and experience are necessary to her. She plays her liberty and her happiness, and she is not allowed to throw the dice; she risks her all, and is forced to be a mere spectator. I have the right, the will, the power to make my own unhappiness, and I use them, as did my mother, who, won by beauty and led by instinct, married the most generous, the most liberal, the most loving of men. I know that you are free, a poet, and noble-looking. Be sure that I should not have chosen for a confidant one of your brothers in Apollo who was already married. If my mother was won by beauty, which is perhaps the spirit of form, why should I not be attracted by the spirit and the form united? Shall I not know you better by studying you in this correspondence than I could through the vulgar experience of 'receiving your addresses'? That is the question, as Hamlet says.

"But my proceedings, dear Chrysale, have at least the merit of not binding us personally. I know that love has its illusions, and every illusion its to-morrow. That is why there are so many partings among lovers who believed themselves bound to each other for life. The proof of love lies in two things—suffering and happiness. When, after passing through these double trials of life two beings have shown each other their defects as well as their good qualities, when they have really observed each other's character, then they may go to their grave hand in hand. My dear Argante, who told you that our little drama was to have no future? In any case shall we not have enjoyed the pleasures of our correspondence?

"I await your orders, monseigneur, and I am, with all my heart,

"Your handmaiden,

"O. d'Este M."

"To Mademoiselle O. d'Este M.—You are a witch, a spirit, and I love you! Is that what you desired of me, most original of girls? Perhaps you are only seeking to amuse your provincial leisure with the spectacle of the follies which a poet can commit. If so, you have done a bad deed. Your two letters have enough of the spirit of mischief in them to force this doubt into the mind of a Parisian. But I am no longer master of myself; my life, my future depend on the answer you will make me. Tell me if the certainty of an unbounded affection, given in ignorance of all social conventions, will touch you—if you will suffer me to seek you. There is anxiety enough and uncertainty enough in the question as to whether I can personally please you. If

your reply is favorable I change my life, I bid adieu to many irksome pleasures which we have the folly to call happiness. Happiness, my dear and beautiful unknown, is what you dream it to be—a fusion of feelings, a perfect accordance of souls, the imprint of a noble ideal (such as God permits us to form here below) upon the trivial round of daily life whose habits we must needs obey, a constancy of heart more precious far than what we call fidelity. Can we say that we make sacrifices when the end in view is our eternal good, the dream of poets, the dream of maidens, the poem which, at the entrance of life, as soon as thought essays its wings, each noble intellect has pondered and caressed only to see it shivered to fragments on some stumbling block as hard as it is vulgar?—for to the great majority of men, the foot of reality steps instantly on that mysterious egg so seldom hatched.

"I will not yet speak to you of myself, of my past life, of my character, nor of an affection almost maternal on one side, filial on mine, which you have already seriously changed, and whose effect upon my life would explain my use of the word 'sacrifice.' You have already rendered me forgetful, not to say ungrateful; does that satisfy you? Oh, speak! Say to me one word, and I will love you till my eyes close in death, as the Marquis de Pescaire loved his wife, as Romeo loved Juliet, faithfully. Our life will be, for me at least, that 'felicity untroubled' which Dante made the very element of his Paradiso—a poem far superior to his Inferno. It is strange, but it is not myself that I doubt in the long reveries through which, like you, I follow the windings of a dreamed existence; it is you. Yes, dear, I feel within me the power to love, and to love endlessly—to march to the grave with gentle slowness and a smiling eye, with my beloved on my arm, and with never a cloud upon the sunshine of our souls. Yes, I dare to face our mutual old age, to see ourselves with whitening heads, like the venerable historian of Italy, inspired always with the same affection but transformed with the spirit of each season. Hear me, I can no longer be your friend only. Though Chrysale, Geronte, and Argante re-live, you say, in me, I am not yet old enough to drink from the cup held to my lips by the sweet hands of a veiled woman without a passionate desire to tear off the domino and the mask and see the face. Either write me no more, or give me hope. Let me see you, or let me go. Must I bid you adieu? Will you permit me to sign myself,

"YOUR FRIEND?"

"TO MONSIEUR DE CANALIS—What flattery! with what rapidity is the grave Anselme transformed into a handsome Leander! To what must I attribute such a change? to this black which I put upon this white? to these ideas which are to the flowers of my soul what a rose drawn in charcoal is to the roses in the garden? Or to a recollection of the young girl whom you took for me, and who is personally as like me as a waiting-woman is like her mistress? Have we changed rôles? Have I the sense? have you the fancy? But a truce with jesting.

"Your letter has made me know the entrancing pleasures of the soul; the first that I have known outside of my family affections. What, says a poet, are the ties of blood which are so strong in ordinary minds, compared to those divinely forged within us by mysterious sympathies? Let me thank you—no, we must not thank each other for such things—but God bless you for the happiness you have given me; may you be happy in the joy you have shed into my soul. You explain to me some of the apparent injustices in social life. There is something, I know not what, so dazzling, so virile in glory, that it belongs only to man; God forbids us women to wear its halo, but He makes love our portion, giving us the tenderness which soothes the brow scorched by His lightnings. I have felt my mission, or rather you have now confirmed it.

"Sometimes, my friend, I rise in the morning in a state of inexpressible sweet-

ness: a sort of peace, tender and divine, gives me an idea of heaven. My first thought is then like a benediction. I call these mornings my little German wakings, in opposition to my Southern sunsets, full of heroic deeds, battles, Roman fêtes and ardent poems. Well, after reading your letter, so full of feverish impatience, I felt in my heart all the freshness of one of these celestial wakings, when I love the air about me and all Nature, and fancy that I am destined to die for one I love. One of your poems, 'The Maiden's Song,' paints these delicious moments, when gayety is tender, when prayer is a necessity; it is one of my favorites. Do you want me to put all my flatteries into one?—well, then, I think you worthy to be *me!*

"Your letter, though short, enables me to read you. Yes, I have guessed your tumultuous struggles, your piqued curiosity, your projects; but I do not yet know you well enough to satisfy your wishes. Hear me, dear; the mystery in which I am shrouded permits me the freedom which lets you see to the bottom of my heart. If we once meet, adieu to our mutual comprehension! Will you make a compact with me? Was the first one disadvantageous to you? It won you my esteem, and it is a great deal, my friend, to gain an admiration lined throughout with esteem. Write me your life in a few words; then tell me what you do in Paris, day by day, with no reservations, and as if you were talking with an old friend. Well, having done that, I will take a step myself—I will see you, I promise you that. And it is a great deal.

"This, dear, is no intrigue, no adventure; no gallantry, as you men call it, can come of it, I warn you frankly. It involves my life, and more than that—something that causes me remorse for the many thoughts that fly to you in flocks—it involves my father's and my mother's life. I adore them, and my choice must please them; they must find a son in my friend.

"Tell me, to what extent can the superb spirits of your kind, to whom God has given the wings of His angels, without always adding their amiability—how far can they bend under a family-yoke, and put up with its little miseries? That is a text I have meditated upon. Ah! though I said to my heart before I came to you: Forward! Onward! it did not tremble and palpitate any the less on the way; and I did not conceal from myself the stoniness of the path nor the Alpine difficulties I had to overcome. I thought of all in my long meditations. Do I not know that eminent men like you have known the love they have inspired quite as well as that which they themselves have felt; that they have had many romances in their lives—you particularly, who send forth those airy visions of your soul that women rush to buy? Yet still I cried to myself, 'Onward!' because I have studied, more than you give me credit for, the geography of the great summits of humanity, which you tell me are so cold. Did you not say that Goethe and Byron were the colossi of egoism and poetry? Ah, my friend, you shared there the error into which superficial minds are apt to fall; but in you perhaps it came from generosity, false modesty, or the desire to escape from me? Vulgar minds may mistake the effects of toil for the development of personal character, but you must not. Neither Lord Byron, nor Goethe, nor Walter Scott, nor Cuvier, nor any inventor, belongs to himself, he is the slave of his idea. And this mysterious power is more jealous than a woman; it absorbs them; it makes them live, and kills them for its sake. The visible developments of their hidden existence resemble egotism in their results; but who shall dare to say that the man who has abnegated self to give pleasure, instruction, or grandeur to his epoch, is an egoist? Is a mother selfish when she immolates all things to her child? Well, the detractors of genius do not perceive its fecund maternity, that is all. The life of a poet is so perpetual a sacrifice that he needs a gigantic organization to bear even the ordinary pleasures of life. Therefore, into what sorrows may he not fall when, like Molière, he wishes to live the life of feeling in its most poignant crises;

to me, remembering his personal life, Molière's comic writings are horrible.

"The generosity of genius seems to me half divine; and I place you in this noble family of alleged egoists. Ah! if I had found self-interest, ambition, a seared nature where I now can see my best loved flowers of the soul, you know not what long anguish I should have had to bear. I met with disappointment before I was sixteen. What would have become of me had I learned at twenty that glory is a lie, that he whose books express the feelings hidden in my heart was incapable of feeling them when they were unveiled for him alone? Oh! my friend, do you know what would have become of me? Shall I take you into the recesses of my soul? I should have gone to my father and said, 'Bring me the son-in-law whom you desire; my will abdicates—marry me to whom you please.' And the man might have been a notary, banker, miser, fool, dullard, wearisome as a rainy day, common as the usher of a school, a manufacturer, or some brave soldier without two ideas—he would have had a resigned and attentive servant in me. But what an awful suicide! never could my soul have expanded in the life-giving rays of a beloved sun. No murmur should have revealed to my father, or my mother, or my children the suicide of the creature who at this instant is shaking her fetters, casting lightnings from her eyes, and flying toward you with eager wing. See, she is there in the corner of your room, like Polyhymnia, breathing the air of your presence, and glancing about her with a gently curious eye. Sometimes in the fields where my husband would have taken me to walk, I should have wept, apart and secretly, at sight of a glorious morning; and in my heart, or hidden in a bureau drawer, I might have kept some treasure, the comfort of poor girls ill-used by love, sad, poetic souls.—But I believe in *you*, my friend. That belief rectifies all the thoughts and fancies of my secret ambition, and sometimes—see how far my frankness leads me—I wish I were in the middle of the book we are just beginning; such persistency do I feel in my sentiments, such strength in my heart to love, such constancy sustained by reason, such heroism for the duties for which I was created—if indeed love can ever be changed.

"If you were able to follow me to the exquisite retreat where I fancy ourselves happy, if you knew my plans and projects, the dreadful word 'folly!' might escape you, and I should be cruelly punished for sending poetry to a poet. Yes, I wish to be a spring of waters inexhaustible as a fertile land for the twenty years that nature allows me to shine. I want to drive away satiety by charm. I mean to be courageous for my friend as most women are for the world. I wish to vary happiness. I wish to put intelligence into tenderness, and to give piquancy to fidelity. I am filled with ambition to kill the rivals of the past, to conjure away all outside griefs by a wife's gentleness, by her proud abnegation, and to take all my life such care of the nest as birds can only take for a few weeks. This wealth of love belonged to some great man, and did not deserve to be wasted in some commonplace transaction.

"Do you now think me to blame for my first letter? The mysterious wind of will drove me to you, as the tempest brings the little rose-tree to the pollard willow. In your letter, which I hold here upon my heart, you cried out, like your ancestor when he departed for the Crusades, 'God wills it.'

"Ah! but you will cry out, 'What a chatterbox!' All the people round me say, on the contrary, 'Mademoiselle is very taciturn.' O. D'ESTE M."

XI.

THE foregoing letters seemed very original to the persons from whom the author of the "Comedy of Human Life" obtained them; but their interest in this duel, this crossing of pens between two minds, while the strictest incognito masked the faces, may not be shared. For every hundred

readers, eighty might weary of the battle. The respect due to the majority in every nation under a constitutional government leads us, therefore, to suppress eleven other letters exchanged between Ernest and Modeste, during the month of September. If, later on, some flattering majority should arise to claim them, let us hope that we can then find means to insert them in their proper place.

Urged by a mind that seemed as aggressive as the heart was lovable, the truly chivalrous feelings of the poor secretary gave themselves free play in these suppressed letters, which seem, perhaps, more beautiful than they really are, because the imagination is charmed by a sense of the communion of two free souls. Ernest's whole life was now wrapped up in these sweet scraps of paper, as a miser lives only in his banknotes; while in Modeste's soul a deep love took the place of her delight in agitating a glorious life, and being, in spite of distance, its mainspring. Ernest's heart was the complement of Canalis's glory. Alas! it often takes two men to make a perfect lover, just as in literature we compose a type by collecting the peculiarities of several similar characters. How many a time a woman has been heard to say in her own salon after close and intimate conversations:

"Such a one is my ideal as to soul, and I love the other who is only a dream of the senses."

The last letter written by Modeste, which here follows, gives us a glimpse of the enchanted isle to which the meanderings of this correspondence had led the two lovers.

"To MONSIEUR DE CANALIS — Be at Havre next Sunday; go to church; after the morning mass, walk once or twice round the nave, and go out without speaking to any one, or asking a single question; but wear a white rose in your button-hole. Then return to Paris, where you shall receive an answer. I warn you that this answer will not be what you wish; for, as I told you, the future is not yet mine. But should I not indeed be mad and foolish to say yes without having seen you? When I have seen you I can say no without wounding you; I am sure of remaining incognito."

This letter had been sent off the evening before the day when the abortive struggle between Dumay and Modeste had taken place. The happy girl was impatiently awaiting Sunday, when her eyes were to vindicate or condemn her heart and her actions—a solemn moment in the life of any woman, and which three months of a close communion of souls now rendered as romantic as the most imaginative maiden could have wished. Every one, except the mother, had taken this torpor of expectation for the calm of innocence. No matter how firmly family laws and religious precepts may bind, there will always be the Clarissas and the Julies, whose souls like flowing cups will overflow under some spiritual pressure. Modeste was glorious in the savage energy with which she repressed her exuberant youthful happiness and remained demurely quiet. Let us say frankly that the memory of her sister was more potent upon her than any social conventions; her will was iron in the resolve to bring no grief upon her father and her mother. But what tumultuous heavings were within her breast! no wonder that a mother guessed them.

On the following day Modeste and Madame Dumay took Madame Mignon about mid-day to a seat in the sun among the flowers. The blind woman turned her wan and blighted face toward the ocean; she inhaled the odors of the sea and took the hand of her daughter who remained beside her. The mother hesitated between forgiveness and remonstrance ere she put the important question; for she comprehended the girl's love and recognized, as the pretended Canalis had done, that Modeste was exceptional in nature.

"God grant that your father return in time! If he delays much longer he will find none but you of all those whom he loves. Modeste, promise me once more never to leave him," she said in a fond maternal tone.

Modeste lifted her mother's hands to

her lips and kissed them gently, replying: "Need I say it again?"

"Ah, my child! I left my father to follow my husband; and yet my father was all alone; I was all the child he had. Is that why God has so punished me? What I ask of you is to marry as your father wishes, to cherish him in your heart, not to sacrifice him to your own happiness, but to make him the center of your home. Before losing my sight, I wrote him all my wishes, and I know he will execute them. I enjoined him to keep his property intact and in his own hands; not that I distrust you, my Modeste, for a moment, but who can be sure of a son-in-law? My daughter, was I reasonable? One glance of the eye decided my life. Beauty, so often deceitful, in my case spoke true; but even were it the same with you, my poor child, swear to me that you will let your father inquire into the character, the habits, the heart, and the previous life of the man you distinguish with your love — if, by chance, there is such a man."

"I will never marry without the consent of my father," answered Modeste.

The mother was perfectly silent after receiving this reply, and her death-like face showed that she was meditating after the manner of the blind, studying every accent of her daughter's reply.

"You see, my darling," she said, after a long pause, "that while I am dying by inches through Caroline's wrong-doing, your father would not survive yours, no, not for a moment. I know him; he would put a pistol to his head—there could be no life, no happiness on earth for him."

Modeste walked a few steps away from her mother, but immediately came back.

"Why did you leave me?" demanded Madame Mignon.

"You made me cry, mamma," answered Modeste.

"Ah, my little darling, kiss me. You love no one here? you have no lover, have you?" she asked, holding Modeste on her lap, heart to heart.

"No, my dear mamma," said the little Jesuit.

"Can you swear it?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Modeste.

Madame Mignon said no more; but she still doubted.

"Well, if you do choose your husband, you will tell your father?" she resumed.

"I promised that to my sister, and to you, mother. What evil do you think I could commit while I wear that ring upon my finger and read those words: '*Think of Bettina*'? Poor sister!"

At these words a truce of silence came between the pair; the mother's blighted eyes rained tears which Modeste could not check, though she threw herself upon her knees, and cried, "Forgive me! oh, forgive me, mother!"

Just then the excellent Dumay was coming up the hill of Ingouville on the double-quick—a fact quite abnormal in the present life of the cashier.

Three letters had brought ruin to the Mignons; a single letter now restored their fortunes. That very morning Dumay had received from a sea-captain just arrived from the China Seas the following letter containing the first news of his patron and only friend.

"*To Monsieur Anne Dumay:*

"My dear Dumay—I shall quickly follow, except for the chances of the voyage, the vessel which carries this letter. In fact, I should have taken it, but I did not wish to leave my own ship, to which I am accustomed.

"I told you that no news was to be good news. But the first words of this letter ought to make you a happy man. I have made at least seven millions. I am bringing back a large part of it in indigo, one third in safe London securities, and another third in good solid gold. Your remittances helped me to make the sum I had settled in my own mind much sooner than I expected. I wanted two millions for each of my daughters and a competence for myself.

"I have been engaged in the opium trade with the largest houses in Canton, all ten times richer than I. You have no idea, in Europe, what these rich Chinese merchants are. I went to Asia Minor and purchased opium at low prices, and from

thence to Canton, where I delivered my cargoes to the companies who control the trade. My last expedition was to the Philippine Islands where I exchanged opium for indigo of the first quality. I may have five or six hundred thousand francs more than I stated, for I reckoned the indigo at what it cost me. I have always been well in health; not the slightest illness. That is the result of working for one's children. Since the second year I have owned a pretty little brig of seven hundred tons, called the *Mignon*. She is built of oak, double-planked, and copper-fastened; and all the interior fittings were done to suit me. She is one piece of property the more.

"A sea-life and the active habits required by my business have kept me in good health. To tell you all this is the same as telling it to my two daughters and my dear wife. I trust that the wretched man who took away my Bettina deserted her when he heard of my ruin; and that I shall find the poor lost lamb at the Chalet. My three dear women and my Dumay! All four of you have been ever present in my thoughts for the last three years. You are a rich man, now, Dumay. You share, outside of my own fortune, amounts to five hundred and sixty thousand francs, for which I send you herewith a check, which can only be paid to you in person by the Mongenods, who have been duly advised from New York.

"A few short months, and I shall see you all again, and all well, I trust. My dear Dumay, I write this letter to you because I am anxious to keep my fortune a secret for the present, and because I wish to leave to you the task of preparing my dear angels for the joy of my return. I have had enough of commerce; and I am resolved to leave Havre. The choice of my sons-in-law is a matter of great moment to me. My intention is to buy back the estate of La Bastie, and to entail it, so as to establish an estate yielding at least a hundred thousand francs a year, and then to ask the king to grant that one of my sons-in-law may succeed to my name and title. You know, my poor Dumay, what a terrible misfortune overtook us through the fatal reputation of a large fortune. It cost me my daughter's honor. I brought from Java one of the most wretched of fathers. He was a Dutch merchant, worth nine millions, and his two daughters were stolen from him by scoundrels. We wept together like two children. I have therefore resolved that the amount of my present fortune shall not be known. I shall not disembark at Havre, but at Marseilles. I shall sell my indigo, and negotiate for the purchase of La Bastie through the house of Mongenod in Paris. I shall put my funds in the Bank of France and return to the Chalet, giving out that I have a considerable fortune in merchandise. My daughters will be supposed to have two or three hundred thousand francs. To choose which of my sons-in-law is worthy to succeed to my title and estates and to live with us is now the object of my life; but both of them must be, like you and me, honest, loyal, and firm men, and absolutely honorable.

"My dear old fellow, I have never doubted you for a moment. I have been sure that you and your wife, together with my own, have erected an unassailable barrier around my daughter, and that I shall be able to put a kiss full of hope upon the pure forehead of my remaining angel. Bettina-Caroline will have a fortune. We have gone through wars and commerce together and now we will undertake agriculture; you shall be my bailiff. You will like that, will you not? And so, old friend, I leave it to your discretion to tell what you think best to my wife and daughters; I rely upon your prudence. In four years great changes may have taken place in their characters.

"Adieu, my old Dumay. Say to my daughters and to my wife that I have never failed to kiss them in my thoughts morning and evening since I left them. The second check for forty thousand francs herewith inclosed is for my wife and children in the meantime.

"Your colonel and friend,

"CHARLES MIGNON."

"Your father is coming," said Madame Mignon to her daughter.

"What makes you think so, mamma?" asked Modeste.

"Nothing else could make Dumay hurry himself."

"Victory!" cried the lieutenant as soon as he reached the garden gate. "Madame, the colonel has not been ill a moment; he is coming back—coming back on the *Mignon*, a fine ship of his own, which together with its cargo is worth, he tells me, eight or nine hundred thousand francs. But he requires secrecy from all of us; his heart is still wrung by the misfortunes of our dear departed girl."

"He has still to learn her death," said Madame Mignon.

"He attributes her disaster, and I think he is right, to the rapacity of young men after great fortunes. My poor colonel expects to find the lost sheep here. Let us be happy among ourselves, but say nothing to any one, not even to Latournelle, if that is possible.

"Mademoiselle," he whispered in Modeste's ear, "write to your father and tell him of his loss and also the terrible results on your mother's health and eyesight; prepare him for the shock he has to meet. I will engage to get the letter into his hands before he reaches Havre, for he will have to pass through Paris on his way. Write him a long letter; you have plenty of time. I will take the letter on Monday; Monday I shall probably go to Paris."

Modeste was so afraid that Canalis and Dumay would meet that she started hastily for the house to write to her poet and put off the rendezvous.

"Mademoiselle," said Dumay, in a very humble manner and barring Modeste's way, "may your father find his daughter with no other feelings in her heart than those she had for him and for her mother before he was obliged to leave her."

"I have sworn to myself, to my sister, and to my mother to be the joy, the consolation, and the glory of my father, and *I shall keep my oath!*" replied Modeste with a haughty and disdainful glance at Dumay. "Do not trouble my delight in the thought of my father's return with insulting suspicions. You cannot prevent a girl's heart from beating—you don't want me to be a mummy, do you?" she said. "My hand belongs to my family, but my heart is my own. If I love any one, my father and my mother will know it. Does that satisfy you, monsieur?"

"Thank you, mademoiselle; you have given me back my life," said Dumay, "but you might still call me Dumay, even when you box my ears!"

"Swear to me," said her mother, "that you have not exchanged a word or a look with any young man."

"I can swear that, my dear mother," said Modeste, laughing, and looking at Dumay, who was watching her and smiling to himself like a mischievous girl.

"She must be false indeed if you are right," cried Dumay, when Modeste had left them and gone into the house.

"My daughter Modeste may have faults," said her mother, "but falsehood is not one of them; she is incapable of saying what is not true."

"Well! then let us feel easy," continued Dumay, "and believe that misfortune has closed his account with us."

"God grant it!" answered Madame Mignon. "You will see *him*, Dumay; but I shall only hear him. There is much of sadness in my joy."

XII.

Modeste, happy as she was in the return of her father, was, nevertheless, pacing her room as disconsolate as Perrette on seeing her eggs broken. She had hoped her father would bring back a much larger fortune than Dumay had mentioned. Nothing could satisfy her new-found ambition on behalf of her poet less than at least half the six millions she had talked of in her second letter. Agitated by her double joy, and by the grief caused by her comparative poverty, she seated herself at the piano, that confidant of so many young girls, who express their wishes and desires on

the keys, by the notes and tones of their music. Dumay was talking with his wife in the garden under the windows, telling her the secret of their own wealth, and questioning her as to her desires and her intentions. Madame Dumay had, like her husband, no other family than the Mignons. Husband and wife agreed, therefore, to go and live in Provence, if the Comte de la Bastie really meant to live in Provence, and to leave their money to whichever of Modeste's children might seem to need it most.

"Listen to Modeste," said Madame Mignon, addressing them. "None but a girl in love can compose such airs without having studied music."

Houses may burn, fortunes be engulfed, fathers return from distant lands, empires may crumble away, the cholera may ravage cities, but a maiden's love wings its flight as Nature pursues her way, or as that alarming acid which chemistry has lately discovered, and which will presently eat through the globe, if nothing stops it at the center.

Modeste, under the inspiration of her present situation, was putting to music certain stanzas which we are compelled to quote here—albeit they are printed in the second volume of the edition Dauriat had mentioned—because, in order to adapt them to her music, which had the inexpressible charm of sentiment so admired in great singers, Modeste had taken liberties with the lines in a manner that may astonish the admirers of a poet so famous for the correctness, sometimes too precise, of his measures.

THE MAIDEN'S SONG.

Heart awake ! the lark already
  Shakes his wings that heavenward rise ;
Sleep no more ; the waking violet,
  Wafts her incense to the skies.

Flowers revived, from sleep awaking,
  See themselves in drops of dew
In the calyx of each blossom,
  Liquid pearls their mirror true.

In the night, the god of roses,
  Paused to bless their dewy bloom ;
See ! each bud grows brighter for him ;
  Yielding up its rich perfume.

Then awake ! the lark already
  Shakes his wings that heavenward rise.
Naught is sleeping—Heart ! awaking,
  Light thine incense to the skies.

"It is very pretty," said Madame Dumay. "Modeste is a musician, there's no mistake about it."

"The devil is in her !" cried the cashier, into whose heart the suspicion of the mother forced its way and made him shiver.

"She loves," persisted Madame Mignon.

By succeeding, through the undeniable testimony of the song, in making the cashier a sharer in her belief as to the state of Modeste's heart, Madame Mignon destroyed the happiness which the return and the prosperity of his master had brought him. The poor Breton went down the hill to Havre and to his desk in Gobenheim's counting-room with a heavy heart ; before returning to dinner, he went to see Latournelle, to tell his fears, and beg once more for the notary's advice and assistance.

"Yes, my dear friend," said Dumay, when they parted on the steps of the notary's door, "I now agree with madame ; she loves—yes, I am sure of it ; but the devil knows who it is ; I am dishonored."

"Don't make yourself unhappy, Dumay," answered the notary. "Among us all we can surely get the better of the little puss ; sooner or later, every girl in love betrays herself — you may be sure of that. But we will talk about it this evening."

Thus it happened that all those devoted to the Mignon family were fully as disquieted and uncertain as they were before the old soldier tried the experiment which he expected would be so decisive. The ill-success of his past efforts so stimulated Dumay's sense of duty, that he determined not to go to Paris to see after his own fortune until he had guessed the riddle of Modeste's heart. These friends, to whom feelings were more precious than interests, well knew that unless the daughter were pure and innocent, the father would die of grief when he came to know the death of Bettina and the blindness

of his wife. The distress of poor Dumay made such an impression on the Latournelles that they even forgot their parting with Exupère, whom they had sent off that morning to Paris. During dinner, while the three were alone, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle and Butscha turned the problem over and over in their minds, and discussed every aspect of it.

"If Modeste loved any one in Havre she would have shown some fear yesterday," said Madame Latournelle; "her lover, therefore, lives somewhere else."

"She swore to her mother this morning," said the notary, "in presence of Dumay, that she had not exchanged a look or a word with any living soul."

"Then she loves after my fashion!" exclaimed Butscha.

"And how do you love, my poor lad?" asked Madame Latournelle.

"Madame," said the little cripple, "I love alone and afar—oh! as far as from here to the stars."

"How do you manage it, you silly fellow?" said Madame Latournelle, smiling.

"Ah, madame!" said Butscha, "what you call my hump is the socket of my wings."

"So that is the explanation of your seal, is it?" cried the notary.

Butscha's seal was a star, and under it the words *Fulgens, sequar*—"Shining One, I follow thee"—the motto of the house of Chastillonest.

"A beautiful woman may feel as much suspicion as the ugliest," said Butscha, as if speaking to himself; "Modeste is clever enough to fear she may be loved only for her beauty."

Hunchbacks are extraordinary creations, due entirely to society; for, according to Nature's plan, feeble beings ought to perish. The curvature or distortion of the spinal column creates in these outwardly deformed subjects as it were a storage-battery, where the nerve currents accumulate more abundantly than under normal conditions—where they develop, and whence they are emitted as if in lightning flashes, to vivify the interior being. From this, forces result which are sometimes brought to light by magnetism, though they are far more frequently lost in the vague spaces of the spiritual world. It is rare to find a deformed person who is not gifted with some special faculty—a whimsical or sparkling gayety perhaps, an utter malignity, or an almost sublime goodness. Like instruments which the hand of art can never fully waken, these beings, highly privileged though they know it not, live within themselves, as Butscha lived, provided their natural forces so magnificently concentrated have not been spent in the struggle they have been forced to maintain, against tremendous odds, to keep alive. This explains many superstitions, the popular legends of gnomes, frightful dwarfs, deformed fairies—all that race of bottles, as Rabelais called them, containing elixirs and precious balms.

Butscha, therefore, had very nearly guessed the puzzle. With all the curiosity of a hopeless lover, a vassal ever ready to die—like the soldiers alone and abandoned in the snows of Russia, who still cried out, "Long live the Emperor"—he meditated how to capture Modeste's secret for his own private knowledge. So thinking, he followed his patrons to the Chalet that evening, with a cloud of care upon his brow; for he knew it was most important to hide from all these watchful eyes and ears the net in which he should entrap the young girl. It would have to be by some intercepted glance, some sudden start, as when a surgeon lays his finger on a hidden sore. That evening Gobenheim did not appear, and Butscha was Dumay's partner against Monsieur and Madame Latournelle. During the few moments of Modeste's absence, about nine o'clock, to prepare for her mother's bedtime, Madame Mignon and her friends spoke openly to one another; but the poor clerk, depressed by the conviction of Modeste's love, in which he also now believed, seemed to pay as little attention to the discussion as Gobenheim had done on the previous night.

"Well, what's the matter with you, Butscha?" cried Madame Latournelle;

"one would really think you hadn't a friend in the world."

Tears shone in the eyes of the poor fellow, who was the son of a Swedish sailor, and whose mother had died of grief at the hospital.

"I have no one in the world but you," he answered with a troubled voice; "and your compassion is so much a part of your religion that I can never lose it—and I will never deserve to lose it."

This answer struck the sensitive chord of true delicacy in the minds of all present.

"We all love you, Monsieur Butscha," said Madame Mignon, much moved.

"I've six hundred thousand francs of my own," cried Dumay, "and you shall be a notary in Havre, and succeed Latournelle."

The American wife took the hand of the poor hunchback and pressed it.

"What! you have six hundred thousand francs!" exclaimed Latournelle, pricking up his ears as Dumay let fall the words; "and you allow these ladies to live as they do! Modeste ought to have a fine horse; and why doesn't she continue to take lessons in music, and painting, and—"

"Why, he has only had the money a few hours!" cried the little wife.

"Hush!" murmured Madame Mignon.

While these words were exchanged, Butscha's august mistress turned toward him, preparing to make a speech:—

"My son," she said, "you are so surrounded by true affection that it never occurred to me how my thoughtless use of that familiar phrase might be construed; but you must thank me for my little blunder, because it has served to show you what friends your noble qualities have won."

"Then you must have news from Monsieur Mignon," resumed the notary.

"He is on his way home," said Madame Mignon; "but let us keep the secret to ourselves. When my husband learns how faithful Butscha has been to us, how he has shown the warmest and most disinterested friendship when others have given us the cold shoulder, he will not let you alone provide for him, Dumay. And so, my friend," she added, turning her blind face toward Butscha; "you can begin at once to negotiate with Latournelle."

"He's of legal age, twenty-five and a half years. As for me, it will be paying a debt, my boy, to make the purchase easy for you," said the notary.

Butscha was kissing Madame Mignon's hand, and his face was wet with tears as Modeste opened the door of the salon.

"What are you doing to my Black Dwarf?" she demanded. "Who is making him unhappy?"

"Ah! Mademoiselle Modeste, do we luckless fellows, cradled in misfortune, ever weep for grief? They have just shown me as much affection as I could feel for them if they were indeed my own relations. I'm to be a notary; I shall be rich. Ha! ha! the poor Butscha may become the rich Butscha. You don't know what audacity there is in this abortion," he cried.

With that he gave himself a resounding blow on the cavity of his chest and took up a position before the fire-place, after casting a glance at Modeste, which slipped like a ray of light between his heavy half-closed eyelids. He perceived, in this unexpected incident, an opportunity of interrogating the heart of his sovereign. Dumay thought for a moment that the clerk dared to aspire to Modeste, and he exchanged a rapid glance with his friends, who understood him, and began to eye the little man with a species of terror mingled with curiosity.

"I, too, have my dreams," said Butscha, not taking his eyes from Modeste.

The young girl lowered her eyelids with a movement that was a revelation to the young man.

"You love romance," he continued, addressing her. "Let me, in this moment of happiness, tell you mine; and you shall tell me in return whether the conclusion of the tale I have invented for my life is possible. To me wealth would bring greater happiness than to other men; for the highest happiness I can imagine would be to enrich the one I loved. You, mademoiselle, who know so many things,

tell me if it is possible for a man to make himself beloved independently of his person, be it handsome or ugly, and for his spirit only?"

Modeste raised her eyes and looked at Butscha. It was a piercing and questioning glance; for she shared Dumay's suspicion of Butscha's motive.

"Let me be rich, and I will seek some beautiful poor girl, abandoned like myself, who has suffered, and who knows what misery is. I will write to her, console her, and be her guardian spirit; she shall read my heart and my soul; she shall possess my double wealth—my gold, delicately offered, and my thought robed in all the splendor which the accident of birth has denied to my grotesque body. But I myself shall remain hidden like the cause that science seeks. God Himself may not be glorious to the eye. Well, naturally, the maiden will be curious; she will wish to see me; but I shall tell her that I am a monster of ugliness; I shall picture myself hideous."

At these words Modeste looked intently at Butscha. If she had said aloud, "What do you know of my love?" she could not have been more explicit.

"If I have the honor of being loved for the poem of my heart, if some day such love may make a woman think me only slightly deformed, confess, mademoiselle, that I shall be happier than the handsomest of men—as happy as a man of genius beloved by some celestial being like yourself."

The color which suffused the young girl's face told the cripple nearly all he sought to know.

"Well," he went on, "if we enrich the one we love, if we please the spirit and withdraw the body, is not that the way to make one's self beloved? At any rate it is the dream of the poor dwarf—a dream of yesterday; for to-day your mother gives me the key to future wealth by promising me the means of buying a practice. But before I become another Gobenheim, I seek to know whether this dream could be really carried out. What do you say, mademoiselle, *you?*"

Modeste was so astonished that she did not notice the question. The trap of the lover was much better baited than that of the soldier, for the poor girl was rendered speechless.

"Poor Butscha!" whispered Madame Latournelle to her husband. "Would he make a fool of himself?"

"You want to realize the story of Beauty and the Beast," said Modeste at length; "but you forget that the Beast turned into Prince Charming."

"Do you think so?" said the dwarf. "Now I have always thought that that transformation meant the phenomenon of the soul made visible, obliterating the form under the light of the spirit. If I were not loved I should stay hidden, that is all. You and yours, madame," he continued, addressing his mistress, "instead of having a dwarf at your service, will now have a life and a fortune."

So saying, Butscha resumed his seat, remarking to the three whist-players with an assumption of calmness, "Whose deal is it?" but within his soul he whispered sadly to himself: "She wants to be loved for herself; she corresponds with some pretended great man; how has it gone?"

"Dear mamma, it is a quarter to ten o'clock," said Modeste.

Madame Mignon said good-night to her friends, and went to bed.

They who wish to love in secret may have Pyrenean hounds, mothers, Dumays, and Latournelles to spy upon them, and not be in any danger; but when it comes to a lover!—ah! that is diamond cut diamond, flame against flame, mind to mind, an equation whose terms are mutual.

On Sunday morning Butscha arrived at the Chalet before Madame Latournelle, who always came to take Modeste to church, and he proceeded to blockade the house in expectation of the postman.

"Have you a letter for Mademoiselle Mignon?" he said to that humble functionary when he appeared.

"No, monsieur, none."

"This house has been a good customer to the post of late," remarked the clerk.

"Yes, indeed," replied the man.

Modeste both heard and saw the little colloquy from her chamber window, where she always posted herself behind the blinds at this particular hour to watch for the postman. She ran downstairs, went into the little garden, and called in an imperative voice—

"Monsieur Butscha!"

"Here I am, mademoiselle," said the cripple, reaching the gate as Modeste herself opened it.

"Will you be good enough to tell me whether among your various titles to a woman's affection you count that of the shameless spying in which you are now engaged?" demanded the girl, attempting to crush her slave with the glance and gesture of a queen.

"Yes, mademoiselle," he answered proudly. "Ah! I never expected," he continued in a low tone, "that the grub could be of service to a star—but so it is. Would you rather that your mother and Monsieur Dumay and Madame Latournelle had guessed your secret than one, excluded as it were from life, who seeks to be to you one of these flowers that you cut and wear for a moment? They all know you love; but I, I alone, *know how*. Use me as you would a vigilant watch-dog; I will obey you, protect you, and never bark; neither will I condemn you. I ask only to be of service to you. Your father has made Dumay keeper of the hen-roost, take Butscha to watch outside — poor Butscha, who doesn't ask for anything, not so much as a bone."

"Well, I will give you a trial," said Modeste, whose strongest desire was to get rid of so clever a watcher. "Please go at once to all the hotels in Graville and in Havre, and ask if a gentleman has arrived from England named Monsieur Arthur—"

"Listen to me, mademoiselle," said Butscha, interrupting Modeste respectfully. "I will willingly go and take a walk on the seashore, for you don't want me to go to church to-day."

Modeste looked at her dwarf in silent astonishment.

"Mademoiselle, you have wrapped your face in cotton-wool and a silk handkerchief, but there's nothing the matter with you; and you have put that thick veil on your bonnet to see some one yourself without being seen."

"Where did you acquire all that penetration?" cried Modeste, blushing.

"Moreover, mademoiselle, you have not put on your corset; a cold in the head wouldn't oblige you to disfigure your waist and wear half a dozen petticoats, nor hide your hands in these old gloves, and your pretty feet in those hideous shoes, nor dress yourself like a beggar-woman, nor—"

"That's enough," she said. "How am I to be certain that you will obey me?"

"My master is obliged to go to Sainte-Adresse. He does not like it, but he is so truly good he won't deprive me of my Sunday; I will offer to go for him."

"Go, and I will trust you."

"You are sure I can do nothing for you in Havre?"

"Nothing. Hear me, mysterious dwarf —look," she continued, pointing to the cloudless sky; "can you see a single trace of that bird that flew by just now? No; well then, my actions are as pure as the air, and leave no stain behind them. You may reassure Dumay and the Latournelles, and my mother. That hand," she said, holding up a pretty delicate hand, with the points of the rosy fingers, through which the light shone, slightly turning back, "will never be given, it will never even be kissed by what people call a lover until my father has returned."

"Why don't you want me in the church to-day?"

"Do you venture to question me after all I have done you the honor to say, and to ask of you?"

Butscha bowed without another word, and departed to find his master, in all the rapture of being taken into the service of his goddess.

Half an hour later, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle came to fetch Modeste, who complained of a dreadful toothache.

"I really have not the courage to dress myself," she said.

"Well, then," replied the worthy chaperon, "stay at home."

"Oh, no!" said Modeste. "I would rather not. I have bundled myself up, and I don't think it will do me any harm to go out."

And Mademoiselle Mignon marched off beside Latournelle, refusing to take his arm lest she should be questioned about the outward trembling which betrayed her inward agitation at the thought of at last seeing her great poet. One look, the first—would it not decide her fate?

XIII.

In the life of man there is no more delightful moment than that of a first rendezvous. The sensations then hidden at the bottom of our hearts, which are finding their first expression, can never be renewed. Can we feel again the nameless pleasures that we felt when, like Ernest de la Brière, we looked up our sharpest razors, our finest shirt, an irreproachable collar, and our best clothes? We deify the garments associated with that all-supreme moment. We weave within us poetic fancies quite equal to those of the woman; and the day when either party guesses them they take wings to themselves and fly away. Are not such things like the flower of wild fruits, bitter-sweet, grown in the heart of a forest, the joy of the scant sun-rays, the joy, as Canalis says in the "Maiden's Song," of the plant itself whose eyes unclosing see its own image within its breast?

Such emotions, now taking place in La Brière, tend to show that, like other poor fellows for whom life begins in toil and care, he had never yet been loved. Arriving at Havre overnight, he had gone to bed at once, like a true coquette, to obliterate all traces of fatigue; and now, after taking his bath, he had put himself into a costume carefully adapted to show him off to the best advantage. This is, perhaps, the right moment to exhibit his portrait, if only to justify the last letter that Modeste was still to write to him.

He was of a good family in Toulouse, and allied by marriage to the minister who first took him under his protection; he had that air of good-breeding which comes of an education begun in the cradle; and the habit of managing business affairs gave him a certain sedateness which was not pedantic — though pedantry is the natural outgrowth of premature gravity. He was of ordinary height; his face, which won upon all who saw him by its delicacy and sweetness, was warm in the flesh-tints, though without color, and relieved by a small mustache and imperial à la Mazarin. Without this evidence of virility he might have resembled a young woman in disguise, so refined was the shape of his face and the cut of his lips, so feminine the transparent ivory of a set of teeth, regular enough to have seemed artificial. Add to these womanly points a habit of speech as gentle as the expression of the face; as gentle, too, as the blue eyes with their Turkish eyelids, and you will readily understand how it was that the minister occasionally called his young secretary Mademoiselle de la Brière. The full, clear forehead, well framed by abundant black hair, was dreamy, and did not contradict the character of the face, which was altogether melancholy. The prominent arch of the upper eyelid, though very beautifully cut, overshadowed the glance of the eye, and added a physical sadness—if we may so call it—produced when the lids droop too heavily over the eyeball. This inward doubt—which is called modesty—was expressed in his whole person. Perhaps we shall be able to make his appearance better understood if we say that the logic of design required greater length in the oval of his head, more space between the chin, which ended abruptly, and the forehead, which was reduced in height by the way in which the hair grew. The face had, in short, a rather compressed appearance. Hard work had already drawn furrows between the eyebrows, which were somewhat too thick and too near together, like those of a jealous nature. Though La Brière was then slight, he belonged to the class of temperaments which begin

after they are thirty, to take on an unexpected amount of flesh.

The young man would have seemed to a student of French history a very fair representative of the royal and almost inconceivable figure of Louis XIII.—that historical figure of melancholy modesty without known cause; pallid beneath the crown; loving the dangers of war and the fatigues of hunting, but hating work; timid with his mistress to the extent of keeping away from her; so indifferent as to allow the head of his friend to be cut off —a figure that nothing can explain but his remorse for having avenged his father on his mother. Was he a Catholic Hamlet, or merely the prey of some incurable disease? But the undying worm which gnawed at the king's vitals was in Ernest's case simply distrust of himself—the timidity of a man to whom no woman had ever said, "Ah, how I love thee!" and, above all, the spirit of self-devotion without an object. After hearing the knell of the monarchy in the fall of his patron's ministry, the poor fellow had next met in Canalis a rock covered with exquisite mosses; he was, therefore, still seeking a power to love, and this spaniel-like search for a master gave him outwardly the air of a king who has met with his. This play of feeling, and a general tone of suffering in the young man's face made it more really beautiful than he was himself aware of; for he had always been annoyed to find himself classed by women among the "handsome disconsolate"—a class which has passed out of fashion in these days, when every man seeks to blow his own trumpet and put himself forward.

The self-distrustful Ernest now rested his immediate hopes on the fashionable clothes he intended to wear. He put on, for this sacred interview, where everything depended on a first impression, a pair of black trousers and carefully polished boots, a sulphur-colored waistcoat, which left to sight an exquisitely fine shirt with opal buttons, a black cravat, and a small blue surtout coat which seemed glued to his back and shoulders by some newly-invented process. The ribbon of the Legion of Honor was in his buttonhole. He wore a well-fitting pair of kid gloves of the Florentine bronze color, and carried his cane and hat in the left hand with a gesture and air that was worthy of the Grand Monarch, and enabled him to show, as the sacred precincts required, his bare head with the light falling on its carefully arranged hair. He stationed himself before the service began in the church porch, from whence he could examine the church, while watching the Christians—more particularly the female Christians—who dipped their fingers in the holy water.

An inward voice cried to Modeste as she entered, "It is he!" That surtout, and the whole bearing of the young man, were essentially Parisian; the ribbon, the gloves, the cane, the perfumed hair, were not of Havre. So when La Brière turned about to examine the tall and imposing Madame Latournelle, the notary, and the bundled-up (expression sacred to women) figure of Modeste, the poor child, though she had carefully tutored herself for the event, received a violent blow on her heart when her eyes rested on this poetic figure, illuminated by the full light of day as it streamed through the open door. She could not be mistaken; a small white rose nearly hid the ribbon of the Legion. Would he recognize his unknown mistress muffled in an old bonnet with a double veil? Modeste was so in fear of love's clairvoyance that she began to stoop in her walk like an old woman.

"Wife," said little Latournelle as they took their places, "that gentleman does not belong to Havre."

"So many strangers come here," answered his wife.

"But," said the notary, "strangers never come to look at a church like ours, which is less than two centuries old."

Ernest remained in the porch throughout the service without seeing any woman who realized his hopes. Modeste, on her part, could not control the trembling of her limbs until mass was nearly over. She was in the grasp of a joy that none but she herself could depict. At last she heard the foot-fall of a gentleman on the pavement of the aisle. The service over,

La Brière was making a circuit of the church, where no one now remained but the punctiliously pious, whom he proceeded to subject to a shrewd and keen analysis. Ernest noticed that a prayer-book shook violently in the hands of a veiled woman as he passed her; and as she alone kept her face hidden, his suspicions were aroused, and then confirmed by Modeste's manner, which the lover's eye now scanned and noted. He left the church with the Latournelles and followed them at a distance to the Rue Royale, where he saw them enter a house accompanied by Modeste, whose custom it was to stay with her friends till the hour of vespers. After examining the little house, which was ornamented with scutcheons, he asked the name of the owner, and was told that he was Monsieur Latournelle, the chief notary in Havre. As Ernest lounged along the Rue Royale, hoping for a chance to enter the house, Modeste caught sight of him, and thereupon declared herself far too ill to go to vespers, and Madame Latournelle stayed to keep her company. Poor Ernest thus had his trouble for his pains. He dared not wander about Ingouville; moreover, he made it a point of honor to obey orders, and he therefore went back to Paris, previously writing a letter which Françoise Cochet duly received on the morrow, postmarked Havre.

It was the custom of Monsieur and Madame Latournelle to dine at the Chalet every Sunday when they brought Modeste back after vespers. So, as soon as the invalid felt a little better, they started for Ingouville, accompanied by Butscha. Once at home, the happy Modeste forgot her pretended illness and her disguise, and dressed herself charmingly, humming as she came down to dinner—

> "Naught is sleeping—Heart! awaking,
> Lift thine incense to the skies."

Butscha shuddered slightly when he caught sight of her, so changed did she seem to him. The wings of love were fastened to her shoulders; she had the air of a nymph, a Psyche; her cheeks glowed with the divine color of happiness.

"Who wrote the words to which you have put that pretty music?" asked her mother.

"Canalis, mamma," she answered, flushing rosy red from her throat to her forehead.

"Canalis!" cried the dwarf, to whom the inflections of the girl's voice and her blush told the only thing of which he was still ignorant. "Does that great poet write songs?"

"They are only simple verses," she said, "which I have ventured to set to German airs."

"No, no," interrupted Madame Mignon, "the music is your own, my daughter."

Modeste, feeling that she grew more and more crimson, went off into the garden, calling Butscha after her.

"You can do me a great service," she said. "Dumay is keeping a secret from my mother and me as to the fortune which my father is bringing back with him; and I want to know what it is. Did not Dumay send papa when he first went away over five hundred thousand francs? Yes. Well, papa is not the kind of man to stay away four years and only double his capital. It seems he is coming back on a ship of his own, and Dumay's share amounts to almost six hundred thousand francs."

"There's no need to question Dumay," said Butscha. "Your father lost, as you know, about four millions when he went away, and he has doubtless recovered them. He would of course give Dumay ten per cent of his profits; the worthy man admitted the other day how much it was, and my master and I think that in that case the colonel's fortune must amount to six or seven millions—"

"Oh, papa!" cried Modeste, crossing her hands on her breast and looking up to heaven, "twice you have given me life!"

"Ah, mademoiselle!" said Butscha, "you love a poet. That kind of man is more or less of a Narcissus. Will he know how to love you? A phrase-maker, always busy in fitting words together, is very tiresome. Mademoiselle,

a poet is no more poetry than a seed is a flower."

"Butscha, I never saw such a handsome man."

"Beauty is a veil which often serves to hide imperfections."

"He has the most angelic heart—"

"I pray God you may be right," said the dwarf, clasping his hands, "—and happy! That man shall have, like you, a servant in Jean Butscha. I will not be notary; I shall give that up; I shall study the sciences."

"Why?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, to teach your children, if you will deign to make me their tutor. But, oh! if you would only listen to some advice. Let me take up this matter; let me look into the life and habits of this man—find out if he is kind, or bad-tempered, or gentle, if he commands the respect which you merit in a husband, if he is able to love utterly, preferring you to everything, even his own talent—".

"What does that signify if I love him?" she asked naïvely.

"Ah, true!" cried the dwarf.

At the same moment Madame Mignon was saying to her friends—

"My daughter saw the man she loves this morning."

"Then it must have been that sulphur waistcoat which puzzled you so, Latournelle," said his wife. "The young man had a pretty white rose in his button-hole."

"Ah!" sighed the mother, "the sign of recognition."

"And he also wore the ribbon of an officer of the Legion of Honor. He is a charming young man. But we are all deceiving ourselves; Modeste never raised her veil, and her clothes were huddled on like a beggar-woman's—"

"And she said she was ill," cried the notary; "but she has taken off her mufflings and is just as well as she ever was."

"It is incomprehensible!" said Dumay.

"Not at all," said the notary; "it is now as clear as day."

"My child," said Madame Mignon to Modeste, as she came into the room, followed by Butscha, "did you see a well-dressed young man at church this morning, with a white rose in his button-hole?"

"I saw him," said Butscha quickly, perceiving by everybody's strained attention that Modeste was likely to fall into a trap. "It was Grindot, the famous architect, with whom the town is in treaty for the restoration of the church. He has just come from Paris, and I met him this morning examining the exterior as I was on my way to Sainte-Adresse."

"Oh, an architect, was he? he puzzled me," said Modeste, for whom Butscha had thus gained time to recover herself.

Dumay looked askance at Butscha. Modeste, fully warned, recovered her impenetrable composure. Dumay's distrust was now thoroughly aroused, and he resolved to go to the mayor's office early in the morning and ascertain if the architect had really been in Havre the previous day. Butscha, on the other hand, was equally determined to go to Paris and find out something about Canalis.

Gobenheim came to play whist, and by his presence subdued and compressed all these fermenting feelings. Modeste awaited her mother's bedtime with impatience. She intended to write, but never did so except at night. Here is the letter which love dictated to her while all the world was sleeping:

"To MONSIEUR DE CANALIS—Ah! my friend, my well-beloved! What atrocious falsehoods those portraits in the shop-windows are! And I, who made that horrible lithograph my joy!—I am humbled at the thought of loving one so handsome. No; it is impossible that those Parisian women are so stupid as not to have seen their dreams fulfilled in you. You neglected! you unloved! I do not believe a word of all that you have written me about your lonely and obscure life, your devotion to an idol—sought in vain until now. You have been too well loved, monsieur; your brow, white and smooth as a magnolia leaf, reveals it; and I shall be neglected—for who am I? Ah! why have you called me to life?

"I felt for a moment as though the heavy burden of the flesh was leaving me; my soul had broken the crystal which held it captive; it pervaded my whole being; the cold silence of material things had ceased; all things in Nature had a voice and spoke to me. The old church was luminous. Its arched roof, brilliant with gold and azure, like those of an Italian cathedral, sparkled above my head. Melodies such as the angels sang to martyrs, quieting their pangs, sounded from the organ. The rough pavements of Havre seemed to my feet a flowery pathway; the sea spoke to me with a voice of sympathy, like an old friend whom I had never truly understood. I saw clearly how the roses in my garden and hot-house had long adored me and bidden me love; they lifted their heads and smiled as I came back from church. I heard your name, 'Melchior,' chiming in the flower-bells; I saw it written on the clouds. Yes, I am living, thanks to thee—my poet, more beautiful than that cold, conventional Lord Byron, with a face as dull as the English climate. One glance of thine, thine Orient glance, pierced through my double veil and sent thy blood to my heart, and thence from head to foot. Ah! that is not the life our mother gave us. A hurt to thee would hurt me too at the very instant it was given—my life exists by thy thought only. I know now the purpose of the divine faculty of music; the angels invented it to utter love. Ah, my Melchior, to have genius and to have beauty is too much; a man should be made to choose between them at his birth.

"When I think of the treasures of tenderness and affection which you have given me, more especially during the last month, I ask myself if I dream. No, but you hide some mystery; what woman can yield you up to me and not die? Ah! jealousy has entered my heart with love—a love in which I could not have believed. How could I have imagined so mighty a conflagration? And now—strange and inconceivable revulsion!—I would rather you were ugly.

"What follies I committed after I came home! The yellow dahlias reminded me of your pretty waistcoat, the white roses were my friends; I bowed to them with a look that belonged to you, like all that is of me. The very color of the gloves, molded to hands of a gentleman, your step along the nave—all, all, is so printed on my memory that sixty years hence I shall see the veriest trifles of this fete day—the color of the atmosphere, the ray of sunshine that flickered on a certain pillar; I shall hear the prayer your step interrupted; I shall inhale the incense of the altar; and I shall fancy I feel above our heads the priestly hands that blessed us both as you passed by me at the closing benediction. The good Abbe Marcelin married us then! The happiness, above that of earth, which I feel in this new world of unexpected emotions can only be equaled by the joy of telling it to you, of sending it back to him who poured it into my heart with the lavishness of the sun itself. No more veils, no more disguises, my beloved. Come back to me, oh, come back soon. With joy I now unmask.

"You have no doubt heard of the house of Mignon in Havre? Well, I am, through an irreparable misfortune, its sole heiress. But you are not to look down upon us, descendant of an Auvergne knight; the arms of the Mignon de la Bastie will do no dishonor to those of Canalis. We bear gules, on a bend sable four bezants or; quarterly four crosses patriarchal or: with a cardinal's hat as crest, and the fiocchi for supports. Dear, I will be faithful to our motto: *Una fides, unus Dominus!*—the true faith, and one only Master.

"Perhaps, my friend, you will find some irony in my name, after all that I have done, and all that I herein avow. I am named Modeste. Therefore I have not deceived you by signing 'O. d'Este M.' Neither have I misled you about our fortune; it will amount, I believe, to the sum which rendered you so virtuous. And I know that to you money is a consideration of such small importance that I speak of it without reserve. Let me tell you how happy it makes me to give freedom of

action to our happiness—to be able to say, when the fancy for travel takes us, 'Come, let us go in a comfortable carriage, sitting side by side, without a thought of money'—happy, in short, to tell the king, 'I have the fortune which you require in your peers.' Thus Modeste Mignon can be of service to you, and her gold will have the noblest of uses.

"As to your servant herself—you did see her once, at her window. Yes, 'the fairest daughter of Eve the fair' was your unknown; but how little the Modeste of to-day resembles her of that long past era! That one was in her shroud, this one—have I not told you?—has received from you the life of life. Love, pure and sanctioned, the love my father, now returning rich and prosperous, will authorize, has raised me with its powerful yet childlike hand from the grave in which I slept. You have wakened me as the sun wakens the flowers. The eyes of your beloved are no longer those of the little Modeste so daring in her ignorance—no, they are dimmed with the sight of happiness, and the lids close over them. To-day I tremble lest I can never deserve my fate. The king has come in his glory; my lord has now a subject who asks pardon for the liberties she has taken, like the gambler with loaded dice after cheating Monsieur de Grammont.

"My cherished poet! I will be thy Mignon—happier far than the Mignon of Goethe, for thou wilt leave me in mine own land—in thy heart. Just as I write this pledge of our betrothal a nightingale in the Vilquin park answers for thee. Ah, tell me quick that his note, so pure, so clear, so full, which fills my heart with joy and love like an Annunciation, does not lie to me.

"My father will pass through Paris on his way from Marseilles; the house of Mongenod, with whom he corresponds, will know his address. Go to him, my Melchior, and tell him that you love me; but do not try to tell him how I love you—let that remain forever between ourselves and God. I, my dear one, am about to tell everything to my mother. Her heart will justify my conduct; she will rejoice in our secret poem, so romantic, human and divine in one.

"You have the confession of the daughter; you must now obtain the consent of the Comte de la Bastie, the father of your

"MODESTE.

"P. S.—Above all, do not come to Havre without having first obtained my father's consent. If you love me you will find him as he passes through Paris."

"What are you doing at this time of night, Mademoiselle Modeste?" said the voice of Dumay at her door.

"Writing to my father," she answered; "did you not tell me you should start in the morning?"

Dumay had nothing to say to that, and he went to bed, while Modeste wrote another long letter, this time to her father.

On the morrow, Françoise Cochet, terrified at seeing the Havre postmark on the envelope which Ernest had mailed the night before, brought her young mistress the following letter, taking away the one which Modeste had written.

"TO MADEMOISELLE O. D'ESTE M.—My heart tells me that you were the woman so carefully veiled and disguised, and seated between Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, who have but one child, a son. Ah, my love, if you had only a modest station, without distinction, or importance, or even money, you do not know how happy that would make me. You ought to understand me by this time; why will you not tell me the truth? I am no poet—except in heart, through love, through you. Oh! what power of affection there is in me to keep me here in this hotel, instead of mounting to Ingouville, which I can see from my windows. Will you ever love me as I love you? To leave Havre in such uncertainty is to be punished for loving you as if I had committed a crime? But I obey you blindly. Let me have a letter quickly, for if you have been mysterious, I have returned you mystery for mystery, and I must at last throw off my disguise, show you the poet that I am, and abdicate my borrowed glory."

This letter made Modeste very uneasy. She could not get back the one which Françoise had already posted, before she came to the last words, whose meaning she now sought by reading them again and again ; but she went to her own room and wrote an answer in which she demanded an immediate explanation.

XIV.

WHILE these little events were taking place, other little events were occurring in Havre, which caused Modeste to forget her present uneasiness. Dumay went down to Havre early in the morning, and soon discovered that no architect had been in town the day before. Furious at Butscha's lie, which revealed a conspiracy of which he was resolved to know the meaning, he rushed from the mayor's office to his friend Latournelle.

"Where's your Master Butscha ?" he demanded of the notary, when he saw that the clerk was not in his place.

"Butscha, my dear fellow, has gone to Paris on the steamer. He heard some news of his father this morning on the quays, from a sailor. It seems the father, a Swedish sailor, went to the Indies and served a prince, or something, and he is now in Paris."

"Lies ! it's all a trick ! infamous ! I'll find that devilish cripple if I've got to go express to Paris for him," cried Dumay. "Butscha is deceiving us ; he knows something about Modeste, and has not told us. If he meddles in this thing he shall never be a notary. I'll roll him in the mud from which he came, I'll—"

"Come, come, my friend ; never hang a man before you try him," said Latournelle, frightened at Dumay's rage.

After having explained upon what his suspicions were founded, Dumay begged Madame Latournelle to go and stay with Modeste at the Chalet during his absence.

"You will find the colonel in Paris," said the notary. "In the shipping news quoted this morning in the 'Journal of Commerce,' I found under the head of Marseilles—here, see for yourself," he added, offering the paper. "'The *Bettina Mignon,* Captain Mignon, arrived October 6 ;' it is now the 17th ; the colonel may be in Havre at any moment."

Dumay requested Gobenheim to get along without him, and then went back to the Chalet, which he reached just as Modeste was sealing her two letters, to her father and Canalis. Except for the address the letters were precisely alike both in weight and appearance. Modeste thought she had laid that to her father over that to her Melchior, but had, in fact, done exactly the reverse. This mistake, so often made in the little things of life, occasioned the discovery of her secret by Dumay and her mother. The former was talking vehemently to Madame Mignon in the salon, and revealing to her his fresh fears caused by Modeste's duplicity and Butscha's connivance.

"Madame," he cried, "he is a serpent whom we have warmed in our bosoms ; there's no place in his wretched little body for soul !"

Modeste put the letter for her father into the pocket of her apron, supposing it to be that for Canalis, and came downstairs with the letter for her lover in her hand, hearing Dumay speaking of his immediate departure for Paris.

"What has happened to my Black Dwarf ? why are you talking so loud ?" she said, appearing at the door.

"Mademoiselle, Butscha has gone to Paris, and you, no doubt, know why—to carry on that affair of the little architect with the sulphur waistcoat, who, unfortunately for the hunchback's lies, has never been here."

Modeste was struck dumb ; feeling sure that the dwarf had departed on a mission of inquiry as to her poet's morals, she turned pale, and sat down.

"I'm going after him ; I shall find him," continued Dumay. "Is that the letter for your father, mademoiselle ?" he added, holding out his hand. "I will send it to the Mongenods. Provided the colonel and I may not pass each other on the road."

Modeste gave him the letter. Dumay looked mechanically at the address.

"'Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29'!" he cried out; "what does that mean?"

"Ah, my daughter! that is the man you love," exclaimed Madame Mignon; "the stanzas you set to music were his—"

"And that's his portrait that you have in a frame upstairs," added Dumay.

"Give me back that letter, Monsieur Dumay," said Modeste, rising like a lioness defending her cubs.

"There it is, mademoiselle," he replied.

Modeste put it into the bosom of her dress, and gave Dumay the one intended for her father.

"I know what you are capable of, Dumay," she said; "and if you take one step against Monsieur de Canalis, I shall take another out of this house, to which I will never return."

"You will kill your mother, mademoiselle," replied Dumay, leaving the room and calling his wife.

The poor mother was indeed half-fainting—struck to the heart by Modeste's words.

"Good-by, wife," said the Breton, kissing the American. "Take care of the mother; I go to save the daughter."

He left Modeste and Madame Dumay with Madame Mignon, made his preparations for the journey in a few minutes, and started for Havre. An hour later he was traveling post to Paris, with the haste that nothing but passion or speculation can get out of wheels.

Recovering herself under Modeste's tender care, Madame Mignon went up to her bedroom leaning on the arm of her daughter, to whom she said, as her sole reproach, when they were alone:

"My unfortunate child, see what you have done! Why did you conceal anything from me? Am I so harsh?"

"Oh! I was just going to tell it to you myself," sobbed Modeste.

She thereupon related everything to her mother, read her the letters and their answers, and shed the rose of her poem petal by petal into the heart of the kind German woman. When this confidence, which took half the day, was over, when she saw something that was almost a smile on the lips of the too indulgent mother, Modeste fell upon her breast in tears.

"Oh, mother!" she said amid her sobs, "you, whose heart, all gold and poetry, is a chosen vessel, chosen of God to hold a sacred, pure and celestial love that endures for life; you, whom I wish to imitate by loving no one but my husband—you will surely understand what bitter tears I am now shedding. This butterfly, this dual soul which I have nurtured with maternal care, my love, my sacred love, this living mystery of mysteries, is falling into vulgar hands, and they will tear its wings and rend its veil under the miserable pretext of enlightening me, of discovering whether genius is as correct as a banker, whether my Melchior is capable of saving his money, or whether he has some entanglement to shake off; they want to find out if he is guilty to bourgeois eyes of youthful indiscretions—which to the sun of our love are like the clouds of the dawn. Oh! what will come of it? what will they do? See! feel my hand; it burns with fever. Ah! I shall never survive it."

And Modeste, really taken with a chill, was forced to go to bed, causing serious uneasiness to her mother, Madame Latournelle, and Madame Dumay, who took good care of her during the journey of the lieutenant to Paris—to which city the logic of events compels us to transport our drama for a moment.

Truly modest minds, like those of Ernest de la Brière, but especially those who, knowing their own value, are neither loved nor appreciated, can understand the infinite joy to which the young secretary abandoned himself on reading Modeste's letter. After thinking him lofty and witty in soul, his young, artless mistress now thought him handsome. This is supreme flattery. And why? Beauty is, undoubtedly, the signature of the master to the work into which he has put his soul; it is the divine spirit manifested. And to see it where it is not, to create it by the power of an inward look—is not that the highest attainment of love?

And so the poor youth cried aloud with all the rapture of an applauded author, "At last I am beloved!" When a woman—be she maid, wife, or widow—lets the charming words escape her, "Thou art handsome," the words may be false, but the man opens his thick skull to their subtle poison, and thenceforth he is attached by an everlasting tie to the pretty flatterer, the true or the deceived woman; she becomes his particular world, he thirsts for her continual testimony, and he never wearies of it, even if he is a crowned prince. Ernest walked proudly up and down his room; he struck a three-quarter, full-face, and profile attitude before the glass; he tried to criticise himself; but a voice, diabolically persuasive, whispered to him, "Modeste is right." He took up her letter and re-read it; he saw his fairest of the fair; he talked with her; then, in the midst of his ecstasy, a dreadful thought came to him:

"She thinks me Canalis, and she has a million of money!"

Down went his happiness, just as a somnambulist, who has attained the peak of a roof, hears a voice, awakes, and falls crushed upon the pavement.

"Without the halo of fame I shall be hideous in her eyes," he cried; "what a maddening situation I have got myself into!"

La Brière was too much like his letters, his heart was too noble and pure to allow him to hesitate at the call of honor. He at once resolved to find Modeste's father, if he were in Paris, and confess all to him, and to let Canalis know the serious results of their Parisian jest. To a sensitive nature like his, Modeste's large fortune was in itself a determining reason. He could not allow it to be even suspected that the ardor of the correspondence, so sincere on his part, had in view the capture of a *dot*. Tears were in his eyes as he made his way to the Rue Chantereine to find the banker Mongenod, whose fortune and business connections were partly the work of the minister to whom Ernest owed his start in life.

While La Brière was inquiring about the father of his beloved from the head of the house of Mongenod, and getting information that might be useful to him in his strange position, a scene was taking place in Canalis's study which the ex-lieutenant's hasty departure from Havre may have led the reader to foresee.

Like a true soldier of the imperial school, Dumay, whose Breton blood had boiled all the way to Paris, thought of a poet as a poor stick of a fellow, of no consequence whatever—a writer of gay refrains, living in a garret, dressed in black clothes that were white at every seam, wearing boots that were occasionally without soles, and linen that was unmentionable, and whose fingers knew more about ink than soap; in short, one who looked always as if he had stumbled from the moon, except when scribbling at a desk, like Butscha. But the seething of the Breton's heart and brain received a violent application of cold water when he entered the courtyard of the pretty house occupied by the poet and saw a groom washing a carriage, and also, through the windows of a handsome dining-room, a valet dressed like a banker, to whom the groom referred him, and who answered, looking the stranger over from head to foot, that Monsieur le Baron was not visible. "There is," added the man, "a meeting of the council of state to-day, at which Monsieur le Baron is obliged to be present."

"Is this really the house of Monsieur Canalis," said Dumay, "a writer of poetry?"

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis," replied the valet, "is the great poet of whom you speak; but he is also the president of the court of Claims attached to the ministry of foreign affairs."

Dumay, who had come to box the ears of a scribbling nobody, found himself confronted by a high functionary of the state. The salon where he was told to wait offered, for his meditations, the insignia of the Legion of Honor glittering on a black coat, belonging to Canalis,

which the valet had left upon a chair. Presently his eyes were attracted by the beauty and brilliancy of a silver-gilt cup bearing the words "Given by MADAME." Then he beheld before him, on a pedestal, a Sèvres vase on which was engraved, "The gift of Madame la DAUPHINE."

These mute admonitions brought Dumay to his senses while the valet went to ask his master if he would receive a person who had come from Havre expressly to see him — a stranger named Dumay.

"What sort of a man ?" asked Canalis.

"He is well-dressed, and wears the ribbon of the Legion of Honor."

Canalis made a sign of assent, and the valet retreated, and then returned and announced, "Monsieur Dumay."

When he heard himself announced, when he was actually in presence of Canalis, in a study as gorgeous as it was elegant, with his feet on a carpet far handsomer than any in the house of Mignon, and when he met the studied glance of the poet who was playing with the tassels of his sumptuous dressing-gown, Dumay was so completely taken aback that he allowed the great poet to have the first word.

"To what do I owe the honor of your visit, monsieur ?"

"Monsieur," began Dumay, who remained standing.

"If you have a good deal to say," interrupted Canalis, "I must ask you to be seated."

And Canalis threw himself into an arm-chair à la Voltaire, crossed his legs, raised the upper one to the level of his eye and looked fixedly at Dumay, who became, to use his own martial slang, "bayoneted."

"I am listening, monsieur," said the poet; "my time is precious—the minister expects me."

"Monsieur," said Dumay, "I shall be brief. You have gained an influence—how, I do not know—over a young lady in Havre, who is beautiful and rich; the only hope of two noble families; and I have come to ask your intentions."

Canalis, who had been busy during the last three months with serious matters of his own, and was trying to get himself made commander of the Legion of Honor and minister to a German court, had completely forgotten Modeste's letter.

"I !" he exclaimed.

"You !" repeated Dumay.

"Monsieur," answered Canalis, smiling; "I know no more of what you are talking about than if you had said it in Hebrew. I lead a young girl astray ! I, who—" and a superb smile crossed his features. "Come, come, monsieur, I'm not such a child as to steal fruit over the hedges when I have orchards and gardens of my own where the finest peaches in the world ripen. All Paris knows where my affections are set. Even if there should be some young girl in Havre full of enthusiasm for my verses—of which they are not worthy; that would not surprise me at all; nothing is more common. See ! look at that lovely coffer of ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and edged with that iron-work as fine as lace. That coffer belonged to Pope Leo X., and was given to me by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who received it from the king of Spain. It contains the letters I receive from ladies and young girls living in every quarter of Europe. Oh ! I assure you I feel the utmost respect for these flowers of the soul, cut and sent in moments of enthusiasm that are worthy of all reverence. Yes, to me the impulse of a heart is a noble and sublime thing ! Others — scoffers — light their cigars with such letters, or give them to their wives for curl-papers; but I, who am a bachelor, monsieur, I have too much delicacy not to preserve these artless offerings — so fresh, so disinterested—in a tabernacle of their own. In fact, I guard them with a species of veneration, and when I am on my death-bed they will be burned before my eyes. People may call that ridiculous, but I do not care. I am grateful; these proofs of devotion enable me to bear the criticisms and annoyances of a literary life. When I receive a shot in the back from some enemy lurking under cover of a daily paper, I look at that casket and think—here and there in this wide world there are hearts whose pain has

been healed, or diverted, or soothed by me!"

This bit of poetry, declaimed with all the talent of a great actor, petrified the lieutenant, whose eyes opened to their utmost extent, and whose astonishment amused the poet.

"I will permit you," continued the peacock, spreading his tail, "out of respect for your position, which I fully appreciate, to open that coffer and look for the letter of your young lady. I know I am right, however; I remember names, and I assure you you are mistaken in thinking—"

"And this is what a poor child comes to in this gulf of Paris!" cried Dumay—"the darling of her parents, the joy of her friends, the hope of all, petted by all, the pride of a family, who has six persons so devoted to her that they are making a rampart of their hearts and fortunes between her and sorrow. Monsieur," Dumay resumed after a pause, "you are a great poet, and I am only a poor soldier. For fifteen years I served my country in the ranks; I have had the wind of many a bullet in my face; I have crossed Siberia and been a prisoner there; the Russians flung me on a kibitka, and God knows what I suffered. I have seen thousands of my comrades die—but you have given me a chill to the marrow of my bones, such as I never felt before."

Dumay fancied that his words moved the poet, but in fact they only flattered him—a thing which at this period of his life had become almost an impossibility; for his ambitious mind had long forgotten the first perfumed phial that praise had broken over his head.

"Ah, my soldier!" he said solemnly, laying his hand on Dumay's shoulder, and thinking to himself how droll it was to make a soldier of the empire tremble, "this young girl may be all in all to you, but to society at large what is she? nothing. At this moment the greatest mandarin in China may be yielding up the ghost and putting half the universe in mourning, and what is that to you? The English are killing thousands of people in India more worthy than we are; why, at this very moment while I am speaking to you some ravishing woman is being burned alive—did that make you care less for your cup of coffee this morning? Not a day passes in Paris that some mother in rags does not cast her infant on the world to be picked up by whoever finds it; and yet see! here is this delicious tea in a cup that cost five louis, and I write verses which Parisian women rush to buy, exclaiming, 'Divine! delicious! charming! food for the soul!' Social nature, like Nature herself, is full of forgetfulness. You will be quite surprised ten years hence at what you have done to-day. You are here in a city where people die, where they marry, where they adore each other at an assignation, where young girls commit suicide, where the man of genius with his cargo of thoughts teeming with humane beneficence goes to the bottom—all side by side, sometimes under the same roof, and yet ignorant of each other. And here you come among us and ask us to expire with grief at this commonplace affair."

"You call yourself a poet!" cried Dumay. "Do you not feel what you write?"

"My good sir, if we endured the joys or the woes we sing we should be as wornout in three months as a pair of old boots," said the poet, smiling. "But stay, you shall not come from Havre to Paris to see Canalis without carrying something back with you. Warrior! [Canalis had the form and action of an Homeric hero] learn this from the poet: Every noble sentiment in man is a poem so exclusively individual that his best friend cares nothing for it. It is a treasure which is his alone, it is—"

"Excuse me for interrupting you," said Dumay, who was gazing at the poet with horror, "but did you ever come to Havre?"

"I was there for a day and a night in the spring of 1824 on my way to London."

"You are a man of honor," continued Dumay; "will you give me your word that you do not know Mademoiselle Modeste Mignon?"

"This is the first time that name ever struck my ear," replied Canalis.

"Ah, monsieur!" said Dumay, "into what dark intrigue am I about to plunge? Can I count upon you to help me in my inquiries?—for I am certain that some one has been using your name. You should have received a letter yesterday from Havre."

"I received none. Be sure, monsieur, that I will help you," said Canalis, "so far as I have the opportunity of doing so."

Dumay withdrew, his heart torn with anxiety, believing that the wretched Butscha had worn the skin of the poet to deceive Modeste; whereas Butscha himself, keen-witted as a prince seeking revênge, and far cleverer than any paid spy, was ferreting out the life and actions of Canalis, escaping notice by his insignificance, like an insect that bores its way into the sap of a tree.

The Breton had scarcely left the poet's house when La Brière entered his friend's study. Naturally, Canalis told him of the visit of the man from Havre.

"Ha!" said Ernest, "Modeste Mignon; that is just what I have come to speak of."

"Ah, bah!" cried Canalis; "have I had a triumph by proxy?"

"Yes; and here is the key to it. My friend, I am loved by the sweetest girl in all the world—beautiful enough to shine beside the greatest beauties in Paris, with a heart and mind worthy of a Clarissa Harlowe. She has seen me; I have pleased her, and she thinks me the great Canalis. But that is not all. Modeste Mignon is of high birth, and Mongenod has just told me that her father, the Comte de la Bastie, has something like six millions. The father has been here three days, and I have asked him through Mongenod for an interview at two o'clock. Mongenod is to give him a hint, just a word, that it concerns the happiness of his daughter. But you will readily understand that before seeing the father I feel I ought to make a clean breast of it to you."

"Among the plants whose flowers bloom in the sunshine of fame," said Canalis, impressively, "there is one, the most magnificent, which bears like the orange-tree a golden fruit amid the mingled perfumes of beauty and of mind; a lovely plant, a true tenderness, a perfect bliss, and—it eludes me." Canalis looked at the carpet that Ernest might not read his eyes. "Could I," he continued after a pause to regain his self-possession, "how could I have divined that flower from a pretty sheet of perfumed paper, that true heart, that young girl, that woman in whom love wears the livery of flattery, who loves us for ourselves, who offers us felicity? It needed an angel or a demon to perceive her; and what am I but the ambitious head of a court of Claims! Ah, my friend, fame makes us the target of a thousand arrows. One of us owes his rich marriage to an hydraulic piece of poetry, while I, more seductive, more a woman's man than he, have missed mine—do you love her, this poor girl?" he asked, looking up at La Brière.

"Oh!" ejaculated the young man.

"Well, then," said the poet, taking his secretary's arm and leaning heavily upon it, "be happy, Ernest. By a mere accident I have been not ungrateful to you. You are richly rewarded for your devotion, for I will generously further your happiness."

Canalis was furious; but he could not behave otherwise, and he made the best of his disappointment by making a pedestal of it.

"Ah, Canalis, I have never really known you till this moment."

"What did you expect? It takes some time to go round the world," replied the poet with his pompous irony.

"But think," said La Brière, "of this enormous fortune."

"Ah, my friend, is it not well invested in you?" cried Canalis, accompanying the words with a charming gesture.

"Melchior," said La Brière, "I am yours for life and death."

He wrung the poet's hand and left him abruptly, for he was in haste to meet Monsieur Mignon.

XV.

THE Comte de la Bastie was overwhelmed with the sorrows which lay in wait for him as their prey. He had learned from his daughter's letter of Bettina's death and of his wife's infirmity, and Dumay related to him, when they met, his terrible perplexity as to Modeste's love affairs.

"Leave me to myself," he said to his faithful friend.

As the lieutenant closed the door, the unhappy father threw himself on a sofa, with his head in his hands, weeping those slow, scanty tears which gather between the eyelids of a man of sixty, but do not fall—tears soon dried, yet quick to start again—the last dews of the human autumn.

"To have dear children and an adored wife—what is it but to have many hearts and bare them to a dagger?" he cried, springing up with the bound of a tiger and walking up and down the room. "To be a father is to give one's self over, bound hand and foot, to sorrow. If I meet that D'Estourny I will kill him. To have daughters!—one gives her life to a scoundrel, the other, my Modeste, falls a victim to whom? a coward, who deceives her with the gilded paper of a poet. If it were Canalis himself it might not be so bad; but that Scapin of a lover! —I will strangle him with my two hands," he cried, making an involuntary gesture of furious determination. "And what then? suppose my Modeste were to die of grief?"

He gazed mechanically out of the windows of the Hôtel des Princes, and then returned to the sofa, where he sat motionless. The fatigues of six voyages to India, the anxieties of speculation, the dangers he had encountered and evaded, and his many griefs, had silvered Charles Mignon's head. His handsome soldierly face, so pure in outline, was now bronzed by the suns of China and the southern seas, and had acquired an air of dignity which his present grief rendered almost sublime.

"Mongenod told me to have confidence in the young man who is coming to ask me for my daughter," he thought at last; and at this moment Ernest de la Brière was announced by one of the servants whom Monsieur de la Bastie had attached to himself during the last four years.

"You have come, monsieur, from my friend Mongenod?" he said.

"Yes," replied Ernest, looking timidly at the face before him, which was as somber as Othello's. "My name is Ernest de la Brière, related to the family of the late cabinet minister, and his private secretary during his term of office. When he went out of office, his excellency put me in the court of Claims, to which I am legal counsel, and where I may possibly succeed as chief—"

"And how does all this concern Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked the count.

"Monsieur, I love her; and I have the unspeakable happiness of being loved by her. Hear me, monsieur," cried Ernest, checking a violent movement on the part of the angry father. "I have the strangest confession to make to you, a shameful one for a man of honor; but the worst punishment of my conduct, natural enough in itself, is not the telling of it to you; no, I fear the daughter even more than the father."

Ernest then related simply, and with the nobleness that comes of sincerity, all the facts of his little drama, not omitting the twenty or more letters, which he had brought with him, nor the interview which he had just had with Canalis. When Monsieur Mignon had finished reading the letters, the unfortunate lover, pale and suppliant, trembled beneath the fiery glance of the Provençal.

"Monsieur," said the latter, "in this whole matter there is but one error, but that is all-important. My daughter will not have six millions; at the utmost, she will have a marriage portion of two hundred thousand francs, and very doubtful expectations."

"Ah, monsieur!" cried Ernest, rising and grasping Monsieur Mignon's hand; "you take a load from my breast. Perhaps nothing will now hinder my happiness. I have influence; I shall certainly

be chief of the court of Claims. Had Mademoiselle Modeste no more than ten thousand francs, if I had even to make a settlement on her, she should still be my wife; and to make her happy as you, monsieur, have made your wife happy, to be to you a real son (for I have no father), are the deepest desires of my heart."

Charles Mignon stepped back and fixed upon La Brière a look which entered the eyes of the young man as a dagger enters its sheath; he stood silent a moment, recognizing the absolute candor, the pure truthfulness of that open nature in the light of the young man's inspired eyes. "Is fate at last weary of pursuing me?" he asked himself. "Am I to find in this young man the pearl of sons-in-law?" He walked up and down the room in strong agitation.

"Monsieur," he said at last, "you are bound to submit wholly to the judgment which you have come here to seek, otherwise you are now playing a farce."

"Oh, monsieur!"

"Listen to me," said the father, nailing La Brière where he stood with a glance. "I shall be neither harsh, nor hard, nor unjust. You shall have the advantages and the disadvantages of the false position in which you have placed yourself. My daughter believes that she loves one of the great poets of the day, whose fame attracted her in the first place. Well, I, her father, intend to give her the opportunity to choose between the celebrity which has been a beacon to her, and the poor reality which the irony of fate has flung at her feet. Ought she not to choose between Canalis and yourself? I rely upon your honor not to repeat what I have told you as to the state of my affairs. You may come, you and your friend the Baron de Canalis, to Havre for the last two weeks of October. My house will be open to both of you, and my daughter shall have an opportunity to study you. You must yourself bring your rival, and not disabuse him as to the foolish tales he will hear about the wealth of the Comte de la Bastie. I go to Havre to-morrow, and I shall expect you three days later. Adieu, monsieur."

Poor La Brière went back to Canalis with a dragging step. The poet, meantime, left to himself, had given way to a current of thought out of which had come that secondary impulse so highly praised by Monsieur de Talleyrand. The first impulse is the voice of Nature, the second that of society.

"A girl worth six millions," he thought to himself, "and my eyes were not able to see that gold shining in the darkness! With such a fortune I could be peer of France, count, embassador. I have replied to middle-class women and silly women, and crafty creatures who wanted autographs; and I grew weary of anonymous intrigues — at the very moment when God was sending me a soul of price, an angel with golden wings! Bah! I'll write a sublime poem, and perhaps the chance will come again. Heavens! the luck of that little La Brière—strutting about in my luster—plagiarism. I am the model, and he the statue! It is the old fable of Bertrand and Raton. Six millions, a beauty, a Mignon de la Bastie, an aristocratic divinity loving poetry and the poet! And I, who showed my muscle as man of the world, who did those Alcide exercises to silence by moral force the champion of physical force, that old soldier with a heart, that friend of this very young girl, whom he'll now go and tell that I have a heart of iron!—I, to play Napoleon when I ought to have been seraphic! Good heavens! True, I shall have my friend. Friendship is a beautiful thing. I have kept him, but at what a price! Six millions, that's the cost of it; we can't have many friends if we pay all that for them."

La Brière entered the room as Canalis reached this point in his meditations. He was gloom personified.

"Well, what's the matter?" said Canalis.

"The father exacts that his daughter shall choose between the two Canalis—"

"Poor boy!" cried the poet, laughing, "he's a clever fellow, that father."

"I have pledged my honor that I will take you to Havre," said La Brière, piteously.

"My dear fellow," said Canalis, "if it is a question of your honor, you may count on me. I'll ask for leave of absence for a month."

"Modeste is so beautiful!" exclaimed La Brière, in a despairing tone, "and you can so easily crush me. I wondered all along that fate should be so kind to me; I knew it was all a mistake."

"Bah! we will see about that," said Canalis, with inhuman gayety.

That evening, after dinner, Charles Mignon and Dumay, were flying, by virtue of three francs to each postilion, from Paris to Havre. The father had eased the watch-dog's mind as to Modeste and her love affairs; the guard was relieved, and Butscha's innocence established.

"It is all for the best, my old Dumay," said the count, who had been making certain inquiries of Mongenod respecting Canalis and La Brière. "We are going to have two actors for one part!" he cried gayly.

Nevertheless, he requested his old comrade to be absolutely silent about the comedy which was now to be played at the Chalet—a comedy it might be, but also a gentle punishment, or rather a lesson given by the father to the daughter.

The two friends kept up a long conversation all the way from Paris to Havre, which put the colonel in possession of the facts relating to his family during the past four years, and informed Dumay that Desplein, the great surgeon, was coming to Havre at the end of the present month to examine the cataract on Madame Mignon's eyes, and decide if it were possible to restore her sight.

A few moments before the breakfast-hour at the Chalet, the clacking of a postilion's whip apprised the family that the two soldiers were arriving; only a father's joy at returning after long absence could be heralded with such clatter, and it brought all the women to the garden gate. There are so many fathers and children—perhaps more fathers than children—who will understand the delights of such an arrival, that literature has no need to depict it. Perhaps all gentle and tender emotions are beyond the range of literature.

Not a word that could trouble the peace of the family was uttered on this joyful day. Truce was tacitly established between father, mother, and child as to the so-called mysterious love which had paled Modeste's cheeks—for this was the first day she had left her bed since Dumay's departure for Paris. The colonel, with the charming delicacy of a true soldier, never left his wife's side nor released her hand; but he watched Modeste with delight, and was never weary of noting her refined, elegant, and poetic beauty. It is by such seeming trifles that we recognize a man of feeling. Modeste, who feared to interrupt the subdued joy of the husband and wife, kept at a little distance, coming from time to time to kiss her father's forehead, and when she kissed it overmuch she seemed to mean that she was kissing it for two—for Bettina and herself.

"Oh, my darling, I understand you," said the colonel, pressing her hand as she assailed him with kisses.

"Hush!" whispered the young girl, glancing at her mother.

Dumay's rather sly and pregnant silence made Modeste somewhat uneasy as to the results of his journey to Paris. She looked at him furtively every now and then, without being able to get beneath his stolid imperturbability. The colonel, like a prudent father, wanted to study the character of his only daughter, and above all consult his wife, before entering on a conference upon which the happiness of the whole family depended.

"To-morrow, my precious child," he said, as they parted for the night, "get up early, and we will go and take a walk on the seashore. We have to talk about your poems, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

His last words, accompanied by a smile, which reappeared like reflection on Dumay's lips, were all that gave Modeste any clew to what was coming; but it was enough to calm her uneasiness and keep her awake far into the night with her head full of suppositions; the next morn-

ing, therefore, she was dressed and ready long before the colonel.

"You know all, my kind papa?" she said as soon as they were on the road to the beach.

"I know all, and a good deal more than you do," he replied.

After that remark father and daughter went some little way in silence.

"Explain to me, my child, how it happens that a girl whom her mother idolizes could have taken such an important step as to write to a stranger without consulting her."

"Oh, papa! because mamma would never have allowed it."

"And do you think, my daughter, that that was proper? Though you have been educating your mind in this fatal way, how is it that your good sense and your intellect did not, in default of modesty, step in and show you that by acting as you did, you were throwing yourself at a man's head? To think that my daughter, my only remaining child, should lack pride and delicacy! Oh, Modeste, you made your father pass two hours in hell when he heard of it; for, after all, your conduct has been the same morally as Bettina's without the excuse of the heart's seduction; you were a coquette in cold blood, and that sort of coquetry is head-love, the worst vice of French women."

"I, without pride!" said Modeste, weeping; "but *he* has not yet seen me."

"*He* knows your name."

"I did not tell it to him till my eyes had vindicated the correspondence, lasting three months, during which our souls had spoken to each other."

"Oh, my dear misguided angel, you have mixed up a species of reason with a folly that has compromised your own happiness and that of your family."

"But, after all, papa, happiness is the absolution of my temerity," she said, pouting.

"Oh! your conduct is nothing but temerity, is it?"

"A temerity that my mother practiced before me," she retorted, quickly.

"Rebellious child! your mother, after seeing me at a ball, told her father, who adored her, that she thought she could be happy with me. Be honest, Modeste; is there any likeness between a love hastily conceived, I admit, but under the eyes of a father, and your mad action of writing to a stranger?"

"A stranger, papa? say rather one of our greatest poets, whose character and whose life are exposed to the strongest light of day, to detraction and to calumny—a man robed in fame, to whom, my dear father, I was a mere literary and dramatic personage, one of Shakespeare's women, until the moment when I wished to know if the man himself were as beautiful as his soul."

"Good God! my poor child, you are talking poetry about marriage. But if, from time immemorial, girls have been cloistered in the bosom of their families, if God, if social law puts them under the stern yoke of parental sanction, it is, mark my words, to spare them the misfortunes that this very poetry which charms and dazzles you, and of which you are therefore unable to judge, would entail upon them. Poetry is indeed one of the pleasures of life, but it is not life itself."

"Papa, that is a suit still pending before the Court of Facts; the struggle is forever going on between our hearts and the claims of family."

"Alas for the child that finds her happiness in resisting them," said the colonel gravely. "In 1813 I saw one of my comrades, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, marry his cousin against the wishes of her father, and the pair have since paid dear for the obstinacy which the young girl took for love. The family must be sovereign in marriage."

"My *fiancé* has told me all that," she answered. "He played Orgon for some time; and he was brave enough to disparage the personal lives of poets."

"I have read your letters," said Charles Mignon, with a malicious smile on his lips that made Modeste uneasy, "and I must say that your last epistle was scarcely permissible in any woman, even a Julie d'Etanges. Good God! what harm novels do!"

"We should live them, my dear father, whether people wrote them or not; I think it is better to read them. There are not so many adventures in these days as there were under Louis XIV. and Louis XV., when fewer novels were published. Besides, if you have read those letters, you must know that I have chosen the most angelic soul, the most sternly upright man for your son-in-law, and you must have seen that we love one another at least as much as you and mamma love each other. Well, I admit that it was not all exactly conventional; if you *will* have me say so, I did wrong—"

"I have read your letters," said her father, interrupting her, "and I know exactly how far your lover justified you in your own eyes for a proceeding which might be permissible in some woman who understood life, and who was led away by strong passion, but which in a young girl of twenty was a monstrous piece of wrong-doing."

"Yes, wrong-doing for commonplace people, for the narrow-minded Gobenheims, who measure life with a square rule. Please let us keep to the artistic and poetic life, papa. We young girls have only two ways to act; we must let a man know we love him by mincing and simpering, or we must go to him frankly. Is not the last way grand and noble? We French girls are delivered over by our families like so much merchandise, at sixty days' sight, sometimes thirty, like Mademoiselle Vilquin; but in England, and Switzerland, and Germany, they follow very much the plan I have adopted. Now what have you got to say to that? Am I not half German?"

"Child!" cried the colonel, looking at her; "the supremacy of France comes from her sound common sense, from the logic to which her noble language constrains her mind. France is the reasoning power of the whole world. England and Germany are romantic in their marriage customs—though even their noble families follow our customs. You certainly do not mean to deny that your parents, who know life, who are responsible for your soul and for your happiness, have the right to guard you from the stumbling-blocks that are in your way? Good heavens!" he continued, "is it their fault, or is it ours? Ought we to hold our children under an iron yoke? Must we be punished for the tenderness that leads us to make them happy, and teaches our hearts how to do so?"

Modeste watched her father out of the corner of her eye as she listened to this species of invocation, uttered in a broken voice.

"Was it wrong," she said, "in a girl whose heart was free, to choose for her husband not only a charming companion, but a man of noble genius, born to an honorable position, a gentleman; the equal of myself, a gentlewoman?"

"You love him?" asked her father.

"Father!" she said, laying her head upon his breast, "would you see me die?"

"Enough!" said the old soldier. "I see your love is inextinguishable."

"Yes, inextinguishable."

"Can nothing change it?"

"Nothing."

"No circumstances, no treachery, no betrayal? You mean that you will love him in spite of everything, because of his personal attractions? Even though he proved a D'Estourny, would you love him still?"

"Oh, my father! you do not know your daughter. Could I love a coward, a man without honor, without faith?"

"But suppose he had deceived you?"

"He? that honest, candid man? You are joking, father, or else you have never met him."

"But you see now that your love is not absolute, as you said. I have already made you think of circumstances that could alter your poem; don't you now see that fathers are good for something?"

"You want to give me a lecture, papa; it is positively l'Ami des Enfants over again."

"Poor deceived girl," said her father, sternly; "it is no lecture of mine; I have nothing to do with it except to soften the blow."

"Father, don't play with my life," exclaimed Modeste, turning pale.

"Then, my daughter, summon all your courage. It is you who have been playing with your life, and life is now making sport of you."

Modeste looked at her father in stupid amazement.

"Suppose that the young man whom you love, whom you saw four days ago at church in Havre, was a deceiver?"

"Never!" she cried; "that noble head, that pale face full of poetry—"

"—was a lie," said the colonel, interrupting her. "He was no more Monsieur de Canalis than I am that sailor over there putting out to sea."

"Do you know what you are killing in me?" she rejoined.

"Comfort yourself, my child; though accident has put the punishment of your fault into the fault itself, the harm done is not irreparable. The young man whom you have seen and with whom you exchanged hearts by correspondence, is a loyal and honorable fellow; he came to me and confided everything. He loves you, and I have no objection to him as a son-in-law."

"If he is not Canalis, who is he then?" said Modeste in a changed voice.

"The secretary; his name is Ernest de la Brière. He is not a nobleman; but he is one of those plain men with fixed principles and sound morality who satisfy parents. However, that is not the point; you have seen him and nothing can change your heart; you have chosen him, you comprehend his soul, it is as beautiful as he himself."

The count was interrupted by a heavy sigh from Modeste. The poor girl sat with her eyes fixed on the sea, pale and rigid as death, as if a pistol shot had struck her in those fatal words, *a plain man, with fixed principles and sound morality.*

"Deceived!" she said at last.

"Like your poor sister, but less fatally."

"Let us go home, father," she said, rising from the hillock on which they were sitting. "Papa, hear me, I swear before God to obey your wishes, whatever they may be, concerning my marriage."

"Then you don't love him any longer?" asked her father.

"I loved an honest man, with no falsehood on his face, upright as yourself, incapable of disguising himself like an actor, with the paint of another man's glory on his cheeks."

"You said nothing could change you," remarked the colonel, ironically.

"Ah, do not trifle with me!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and looking at her father in distressful anxiety; "don't you see that you are wringing my heart and destroying my beliefs with your jests?"

"God forbid! I have told you the exact truth."

"You are very kind, father," she said after a pause, and with a kind of solemnity.

"He has kept your letters," resumed the colonel; "now suppose the rash caresses of your soul had fallen into the hands of one of those poets who, as Dumay says, light their cigars with them?"

"Oh!—you are going too far."

"Canalis told him so."

"Has Dumay seen Canalis?"

"Yes," answered her father.

The two walked along in silence.

"So this is why that *gentleman,*" resumed Modeste, "told me so much evil of poets and poetry; why this little secretary said— But," she added, interrupting herself, "his virtues, his noble qualities, his fine sentiments are nothing but an epistolary costume. The man who steals glory and a name may very likely—"

"—break locks, steal purses, and cut people's throats on the highway," cried the colonel. "Ah, you young girls, that's just like you—with your peremptory opinions and your ignorance of life. A man who is capable of deceiving a woman is either on his way down from the scaffold, or about to die on it."

This ridicule stopped Modeste's effervescence, and again there was silence.

"My child," said the colonel, presently, "men in society, as in nature everywhere, are made to win the hearts of women, and

women must defend themselves. You have chosen to invert the parts. Was that wise? Everything is false in a false position. The first wrong-doing was yours. No, a man is not a monster because he seeks to please a woman; it is our right to win her by aggression with all its consequences, short of crime and cowardice. A man may have many virtues even if he does deceive a woman; if he deceives her, it is because he finds her wanting in some of the treasures that he sought in her. None but a queen, an actress, or a woman placed so far above a man that she seems to him a queen, can go to him of herself without incurring blame—and for a young girl to do it! Why, she is false to all that God has given her that is sacred and lovely and noble—no matter with what grace or what poetry or what precautions she surrounds her fault."

"To seek the master and find the servant!" she said bitterly, "oh! I can never recover from it!"

"Nonsense! Monsieur Ernest de la Brière is, to my thinking, fully the equal of the Baron de Canalis. He was private secretary of a cabinet minister, and he is now counsel for the court of Claims; he has a heart, and he adores you, but—he *does not write verses*. No, I admit, he is not a poet; but for all that he may have a heart full of poetry. At any rate, my dear girl," added her father, as Modeste made a gesture of disgust, "you are to see both of them, the sham and the true Canalis—"

"Oh, papa!—"

"Did you not swear just now to obey me in everything, even in the *affair* of your marriage? Well, I allow you to choose which of the two you like best for a husband. You have begun by a poem, you shall finish with a bucolic, and try if you can discover the real character of these gentlemen here, in the country, on a few hunting or fishing excursions."

Modeste bowed her head and walked home with her father, listening to what he said but replying only in monosyllables.

XVI.

Modeste had fallen humiliated from the alp she had scaled in search of her eagle's nest, into the mud of the swamp below, where (to use the poetic language of an author of our day), "after feeling the soles of her feet too tender to tread the broken glass of reality, Imagination—which in that delicate bosom united the whole of womanhood, from the flower-strewn reveries of a chaste young girl to the passionate desires of the sex—had led her into enchanted gardens where, oh, bitter sight! she now saw, springing from the ground, not the sublime flower of her fancy, but the hairy, twisted limbs of the black mandragora." Modeste suddenly found herself brought down from the mystic heights of her love to a straight, flat road bordered with ditches, path of the commonplace. What ardent, aspiring soul would not have been bruised and broken by such a fall? Whose feet were these at which she had shed her thoughts? The Modeste who re-entered the Chalet was no more the Modeste who had left it two hours earlier than an actress in the street is like an actress on the boards. She fell into a state of numb depression that was pitiful to see. The sun was darkened, Nature veiled itself, even the flowers no longer spoke to her. Like all young girls with a tendency to extremes, she drank too deeply of the cup of disillusion. She fought against reality, and would not bend her neck to the yoke of family and conventionality; it was, she felt, too heavy, too hard, too crushing. She would not listen to the consolations of her father and mother, and tasted a sort of savage pleasure in letting her soul suffer to the utmost.

"Poor Butscha was right," she said one evening.

The words indicate the distance she traveled in a short space of time and in gloomy sadness across the barren plain of reality. Sadness, when caused by the overgrowth of hope, is a disease—sometimes a fatal one. It would be no mean object for physiology to search out in what ways and by what means Thought

produces the same internal disorganization as poison; and how it is that despair affects the appetite, destroys the pylorus, and changes all the physical conditions of the strongest life. Such was the case with Modeste. In three short days she became the image of morbid melancholy; she did not sing, she could not be made to smile. Charles Mignon, becoming uneasy at the non-arrival of the two friends, thought of going to fetch them, when, on the evening of the fifth day, he received news of their movements through Latournelle.

Canalis, excessively delighted at the idea of such a rich marriage, was determined to neglect nothing that might help him to cut out La Brière, without, however, giving the latter a chance to reproach him for having violated the laws of friendship. The poet felt that nothing would lower a lover so much in the eyes of a young girl as to exhibit him in a subordinate position; and he therefore proposed to La Brière, in the most natural manner, to take a little country-house at Ingouville for a month, and live there together on pretense of requiring sea-air. As soon as La Brière, who at first saw nothing amiss in the proposal, had consented, Canalis declared that he should pay all expenses, and he sent his valet to Havre, telling him to see Monsieur Latournelle and get his assistance in choosing the house—well aware that the notary would repeat all particulars to the Mignons. Ernest and Canalis had, as may well be supposed, talked over all the aspects of the affair, and the rather prolix Ernest had given a good many useful hints to his rival. The valet, understanding his master's wishes, fulfilled them to the letter; he trumpeted the arrival of the great poet, for whom the doctors ordered sea-baths to restore his health, injured as it was by the double toils of literature and politics. This important personage wanted a house, which must have at least such and such a number of rooms, as he would bring with him a secretary, cook, two servants, and a coachman, not counting himself, Germain Bonnet, the valet. The carriage, selected and hired for a month by Canalis, was a pretty one; and Germain set about finding a pair of fine horses which would also answer as saddle-horses—for, as he said, Monsieur le Baron and his secretary took horseback exercise. Under the eyes of little Latournelle, who went with him to various houses, Germain made a good deal of talk about the secretary, rejecting two or three because there was no suitable room for Monsieur de la Brière.

"Monsieur le Baron," he said to the notary, "makes his secretary quite his best friend. Ah! I should be well scolded if Monsieur de la Brière were not as well treated as Monsieur le Baron himself; and after all, you know, Monsieur de la Brière is a lawyer in my master's court."

Germain never appeared in public unless dressed in black, with spotless gloves, well-polished boots, and otherwise as well appareled as a lawyer. Imagine the effect he produced in Havre, and the idea people took of the great poet from this sample of him! The valet of a man of wit and intellect ends by getting a little wit and intellect himself which has rubbed off from his master. Germain did not overplay his part; he was simple and good-humored, as Canalis had instructed him to be. Poor La Brière did not suspect the harm Germain was doing to his prospects, and the depreciation of himself to which he had consented; for some inkling of the state of things rose to Modeste's ears from these lower regions.

Canalis had arranged to bring his secretary in his own carriage, and Ernest's unsuspicious nature did not perceive that he was putting himself in a false position until too late to remedy it. The delay in the arrival of the pair which had troubled Charles Mignon was caused by the painting of the Canalis arms on the panels of the carriage, and by certain orders given to a tailor; for the poet neglected none of the innumerable details which might, even the smallest of them, influence a young girl.

"It is all right," said Latournelle to Mignon on the sixth day. "The baron's valet has hired Madame Amaury's villa at Sanvic, all furnished, for seven hundred francs; he has written to his master

that he may start, and that all will be ready on his arrival. So the two gentlemen will be here Sunday. I have also had a letter from Butscha; here it is; it's not long: 'My dear master—I cannot get back till Sunday. Between now and then I have some very important inquiries to make which concern the happiness of a person in whom you take an interest.'"

The announcement of this arrival did not arouse Modeste from her gloom; the sense of her fall and the bewilderment of her mind were still too great, and she was not nearly as much of a coquette as her father thought her to be. There is a charming and permissible coquetry, that of the soul, which may be termed love's politeness. Charles Mignon, when scolding his daughter, failed to distinguish between the mere desire of pleasing and the love of the mind—the thirst for love, and the thirst for admiration. Like every true colonel of the empire, he saw in this correspondence, rapidly read, only the young girl who had thrown herself at the head of a poet; but in the letters which we were forced for lack of space to suppress, a better judge would have admired the graceful and modest reserve which Modeste had substituted for the rather aggressive and light-minded tone of her first letters. The father, however, was only too cruelly right on one point. Modeste's last letter had indeed spoken as though the marriage were a settled fact, and the remembrance of that letter filled her with shame; she thought her father very harsh and cruel to force her to receive a man unworthy of her, yet to whom her soul had flown. She questioned Dumay about his interview with the poet, she inveigled him into relating its every detail, and she did not think Canalis as barbarous as the lieutenant had declared him. The thought of the beautiful casket which held the letters of the thousand and one women of this literary Don Juan made her smile, and she was strongly tempted to say to her father: "I am not the only one to write to him; the élite of women send their leaves for the laurel wreath of the poet."

During this week Modeste's character underwent a transformation. The catastrophe—and it was a great one to her poetic nature—roused a faculty of discernment and also the latent malice in her girlish heart, in which her suitors were about to encounter a formidable adversary. It is a fact that when a young woman's heart is chilled her head becomes clear; she observes with great rapidity of judgment, and with a tinge of pleasantry which Shakespeare's Beatrice so admirably represents in "Much Ado about Nothing." Modeste was seized with a deep disgust for men, now that the most distinguished among them had betrayed her hopes. When a woman loves, what she takes for disgust is simply the ability to see clearly; but in matters of sentiment she is never, especially if she is a young girl, in a condition to see the truth. If she cannot admire, she despises. And so, after passing through terrible struggles of the soul, Modeste necessarily put on the armor on which, as she declared, the word "Disdain" was engraved. After reaching that point she was able, in the character of uninterested spectator, to take part in what she was pleased to call the "farce of the suitors," a performance in which she herself was about to play the rôle of heroine. She particularly anticipated the satisfaction of humiliating Monsieur de la Brière.

"Modeste is saved," said Madame Mignon to her husband; "she wants to revenge herself on the false Canalis by trying to love the real one."

Such in truth was Modeste's plan. It was so utterly commonplace that her mother, to whom she confided her griefs, advised her on the contrary to treat Monsieur de la Brière with extreme politeness.

XVII.

"THOSE two young men," said Madame Latournelle, on the Saturday evening, "do not suspect the number of spies they have on their track. There are eight of us on the watch."

"Don't say two young men, wife; say three!" cried little Latournelle, looking round him. "Gobenheim is not here, so I can speak out."

Modeste raised her head, and everybody, imitating Modeste, raised theirs and looked at the notary.

"Yes, a third lover—and he is something like a lover—offers himself as a candidate."

"Bah!" exclaimed the colonel.

"I speak of no less a person," said Latournelle, pompously, "than Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, marquis de Saint-Sever, duc de Nivron, comte de Bayeux, vicomte d'Essigny, grand equerry and peer of France, knight of the Spur and the Golden Fleece, grandee of Spain, and son of the last governor of Normandy. He saw Mademoiselle Modeste at the time when he was staying with the Vilquins, and he regretted then—as his notary, who came from Bayeux yesterday, tells me—that she was not rich enough for him; for his father recovered nothing but the estate of Hérouville on his return to France, and that is saddled with a sister. The young duke is thirty-three years old. I am definitively charged to lay these proposals before you, Monsieur le Comte," added the notary, turning respectfully to the colonel.

"Ask Modeste if she wants another bird in her aviary," replied the count; "as far as I am concerned, I am willing that my lord the grand equerry shall pay her attention."

Notwithstanding the care with which Charles Mignon avoided seeing people, and though he stayed in the Chalet and never went out without Modeste, Gobenheim had reported Dumay's wealth; for Dumay had said to him when giving up his position as cashier: "I am to be bailiff for my colonel, and all my fortune, except what my wife needs, is to go to the children of our little Modeste." Every one in Havre had therefore propounded the simple question that the notary had already put to himself: "If Dumay's share in the profits is six hundred thousand francs, and he is going to be Monsieur Mignon's bailiff, then Monsieur Mignon must certainly have an immense fortune. He arrived at Marseilles on a ship of his own, loaded with indigo; and they say at the Bourse that the cargo, not counting the ship, is worth more than he gives out as his whole fortune."

The colonel was unwilling to dismiss the servants he had brought back with him, whom he had chosen with care during his travels; and he therefore hired a house for them for six months, in the lower part of Ingouville, where he installed his valet, cook, and coachman, all negroes, and three mulattoes on whose fidelity he could rely. The coachman was told to search for saddle-horses for mademoiselle and for his master, and for carriage-horses for the calèche in which the colonel and the lieutenant had returned to Havre. That carriage, bought in Paris, was of the latest fashion, and bore the arms of La Bastie, surmounted by a count's coronet. These things, insignificant in the eyes of a man who for four years had been accustomed to the unbridled luxury of the Indies and of the English merchants at Canton, were the subject of much comment among the business men of Havre and the inhabitants of Ingouville and Graville. Before five days had elapsed the rumor of them ran from one end of Normandy to the other like a train of gunpowder touched by fire.

"Monsieur Mignon has come back from China with millions," some one said in Rouen; "and it seems he was made a count in mid-ocean."

"But he was the Comte de la Bastie before the Revolution," answered another.

"So they call him a liberal just because he was plain Charles Mignon for twenty-five years! What are we coming to?" said a third.

Modeste was considered, therefore, notwithstanding the silence of her parents and friends, as the richest heiress in Normandy, and all eyes began once more to see her merits. The aunt and sister of the Duc d'Hérouville confirmed in the aristocratic salons of Bayeux Monsieur Charles Mignon's right to the title and arms of count, derived from Cardinal

Mignon, for whom the cardinal's hat and tassels were added as a crest. They had seen Mademoiselle de la Bastie when they were staying at the Vilquins, and their solicitude for the impoverished head of their house now became active.

"If Mademoiselle de la Bastie is really as rich as she is beautiful," said the aunt of the young duke, "she is the best match in the province. *She* at least is noble."

The last words were aimed at the Vilquins, with whom they had not been able to come to terms, after incurring the humiliation of staying in that bourgeois household.

Such were the events which, contrary to the rules of Aristotle and of Horace, were to introduce another person into our story; but the portrait and the biography of this personage, this late arrival, shall not be long, taking into consideration his own diminutiveness. The grand equerry shall not take more space here than he will take in history. Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, offspring of the matrimonial autumn of the last governor of Normandy, was born during the emigration in 1796, at Vienna. The old maréchal, father of the present duke, returned with the king in 1814, and died in 1819, before he was able to marry his son, who was Duc de Nivron. He could only leave him the vast chateau of Hérouville, the park, a few dependencies, and a farm which he had bought back with some difficulty; all of which returned a rental of about fifteen thousand francs a year. Louis XVIII. gave the post of grand equerry to the son, who, under Charles X., received the usual pension of twelve thousand francs which was granted to the pauper peers of France. But what were these twenty-seven thousand francs a year and the salary of grand equerry to such a family? In Paris, of course, the young duke used the king's coaches, and had a mansion provided for him in the Rue Saint Thomas du Louvre, near the royal stables; his salary paid for his winters in the city, and his twenty-seven thousand francs for the summers in Normandy.

The fact that this noble personage was still a bachelor was less his fault than that of his aunt, who was not versed in La Fontaine's fables. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville made enormous pretensions, wholly out of keeping with the spirit of the times; for great names, without the money to keep them up, can seldom win rich heiresses among the higher French nobility, who are themselves embarrassed to provide for their sons under the new law of the equal division of property. To marry the young Duc d'Hérouville, advantageously, it would have been necessary to conciliate the great banking-houses; but the haughty pride of the daughter of the house alienated these people by cutting speeches. During the first years of the Restoration, from 1817 to 1825, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, though in quest of millions, refused, among others, the daughter of Mongenod the banker, with whom Monsieur de Fontaine afterward contented himself.

At last, having lost several good opportunities to establish her nephew, entirely through her own fault, she was just now thinking that the property of the Nucingens was basely acquired, and that she did not desire to lend herself to the ambition of Madame de Nucingen, who wished to make her daughter a duchess. The king, anxious to restore the D'Hérouvilles to their former splendor, had almost brought about this marriage, and when it failed he openly accused Mademoiselle d'Hérouville of folly. In this way the aunt made the nephew ridiculous, and the nephew, in his own way, was not less absurd. When great things disappear they leave crumbs, *frusteaux,* as Rabelais would say, behind them; and the French nobility of this century has left us too many such fragments. Neither the clergy nor the nobility have anything to complain of in this long history of manners and customs. Those great and magnificent social necessities have been well represented; but we ought surely to renounce the noble title of historian if we are not impartial, if we do not here depict the present degeneracy of the race of nobles, as we have done elsewhere—in the character of the emigrant, the Comte de Mortsauf (in "The Lily of the Valley"), and the

very nobleness of the nobility in the Marquis d'Espard (in the "Interdiction"). How then could it be that the race of heroes and valiant men belonging to the proud house of Hérouville, who gave the famous marshal to the nation, cardinals to the church, great leaders to the Valois, knights to Louis XIV., was reduced to a little fragile being smaller than Butscha? That is a question which we ask ourselves in more than one salon in Paris when we hear some of the greatest names of France announced, and see the entrance of a thin, pinched, undersized young man, scarcely possessing the breath of life, or a premature old one, or some whimsical creature in whom an observer can with great difficulty trace the signs of past grandeur. The dissipations of the reign of Louis XV., the orgies of that fatal and egotistic period, have produced an effete generation, in which manners alone survive the nobler vanquished qualities—forms, which are the sole heritage our nobles have preserved. The abandonment in which Louis XVI. was allowed to perish may thus be explained, with some slight reservations, as a wretched result of the reign of Madame de Pompadour.

The grand equerry, a fair young man with blue eyes and a pallid face, was not without a certain dignity of thought; but his thin, undersized figure, and the follies of his aunt, who had taken him to the Vilquins and elsewhere to pay his court, rendered him extremely diffident. The house of Hérouville had already been threatened with extinction by the deed of a deformed being (see the *Enfant Maudit* in "Philosophical Studies"). The grand marshal, that being the family term for the member who was made duke by Louis XIII., married at the age of eighty. The young duke admired women, but he placed them too high and respected them too much; in fact, he adored them, and was only at his ease with those whom he could not respect. This characteristic caused him to lead a double life. He found compensation with women of lesser morals for the worship to which he gave himself up in the salons, or, if you like, the boudoirs, of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Such habits, with his puny figure and his mournful face with its blue eyes turning upward in ecstasy, increased the ridicule already bestowed upon him—very unjustly bestowed, as it happened, for he was full of wit and delicacy; but his wit, which never sparkled, only showed itself when he felt at ease. Fanny Beaupré, an actress who was supposed to be his nearest friend, called him "a good wine, but so carefully corked that all the corkscrews break." The beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whom the grand equerry could only worship, annihilated him with a speech which, unfortunately, was repeated from mouth to mouth, like all such pretty and malicious sayings.

"He always seems to me," she said, "like one of those jewels of fine workmanship which we exhibit but never wear, and keep in cotton-wool."

Everything about him, even to his absurdly contrasting title of grand equerry, amused the good-natured king, Charles X., and made him laugh—although the Duc d'Hérouville justified his appointment in the matter of being a fine horseman. Men are like books; they are sometimes understood and appreciated too late. Modeste had seen the duke during his fruitless visit to the Vilquins, and many of these reflections passed through her mind as she watched him come and go. But under the circumstances in which she now found herself, she saw plainly that the courtship of the Duc d'Hérouville would save her from being at the mercy of either Canalis.

"I see no reason," she said to Latournelle, "why the Duc d'Hérouville should not be received. I pass, in spite of our poverty," she continued, with a mischievous look at her father, "for an heiress. I shall probably end by keeping a list of my conquests. Haven't you observed Gobenheim's glances? They have quite changed their character within a week. He is in despair at not being able to make his games of whist count for mute adoration of my charms."

"Hush, my darling!" cried Madame Latournelle, "here he comes."

"Old Althor is in despair," said Gobenheim to Monsieur Mignon as he entered.

"Why?" asked the count.

"Vilquin is going to fail; and the Bourse thinks you are worth several millions. What ill-luck for his son!"

"No one knows," said Charles Mignon, dryly, "what my liabilities in India are; and I do not intend to take the public into my confidence as to my private affairs. Dumay," he whispered to his friend, "if Vilquin is embarrassed we could get back the villa by paying him what he gave for it."

Such was the general state of things, due chiefly to accident, when on Sunday morning Canalis and La Brière arrived, with a courier in advance, at the villa of Madame Amaury. It was known that the Duc d'Hérouville, his sister, and his aunt were coming the following Tuesday to occupy, also under pretext of ill-health, a hired house at Graville. This assemblage of suitors made the wits of the Bourse remark that, thanks to Mademoiselle Mignon, rents would rise at Ingouville. "If this goes on, she will have a hospital here," said the younger Mademoiselle Vilquin, vexed at not becoming a duchess.

The everlasting comedy of "The Heiress," about to be played at the Chalet, might very well be called, in view of Modeste's frame of mind, "The Designs of a Young Girl;" for since the overthrow of her illusions she had fully made up her mind to give her hand to no man whose qualifications did not fully satisfy her.

On the following evening the two rivals, still intimate friends, prepared to pay their first visit to the Chalet. They had spent Sunday and part of Monday in unpacking and arranging Madame Amaury's house for a month's stay. The poet, always calculating effects, wished to make the most of the probable excitement which his arrival would cause in Havre, and which would of course echo up to the Mignons. Therefore, in his rôle of a man needing rest, he did not leave the house. La Brière went twice to walk past the Chalet, though always with a sense of despair, for he feared he had displeased Modeste, and the future seemed to him dark with clouds. The two friends came down to dinner on Monday dressed for the first call, which would be the most important one of all. La Brière wore the same clothes he had so carefully selected for the famous Sunday; but he now felt like the satellite of a planet, and resigned himself to the uncertainties of his situation. Canalis, on the other hand, had carefully attended to his black coat, his orders, and all those little drawing-room elegances, which his intimacy with the Duchesse de Chaulieu and the fashionable world of the faubourg had brought to perfection. He had gone into the minutiæ of dandyism, while poor La Brière was about to present himself with the negligence of a man without hope. Germain, as he waited at dinner, could not help smiling to himself at the contrast. After the second course, however, the valet came in with a diplomatic, or rather, an uneasy air.

"Does Monsieur le Baron know," he said to Canalis in a low voice, "that Monsieur the Grand Equerry is coming to Graville to get cured of the same illness which has brought Monsieur de la Brière and Monsieur le Baron to the seashore?"

"What, the little Duc d'Hérouville?" exclaimed Canalis.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is he coming for Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked La Brière, coloring.

"So it appears, monsieur."

"We are sold!" cried Canalis, looking at La Brière.

"Ah!" retorted Ernest quickly, "that is the first time you have said 'we' since we left Paris: it has been 'I' all along."

"You understood me," cried Canalis, with a burst of laughter. "But we are not in a position to struggle against a ducal coronet, nor the duke's title, nor against the waste lands which the Council of State have just granted, on my report, to the house of Hérouville."

"His grace," said La Brière, with a spice of malice that was nevertheless

serious, "will furnish you with a scrap of compensation in the person of his sister."

Just then the Comte de la Bastie was announced; the two young men rose at once, and La Brière hastened forward to present Canalis.

"I wished to return the visit that you paid me in Paris," said the count to the young lawyer, "and I knew that by coming here I should have the pleasure of meeting one of our great living poets."

"Great!—monsieur," replied the poet, smiling, "no one can be great in a century prefaced by the reign of a Napoleon. In the first place, we are a tribe of would-be great poets; moreover, second-rate talent imitates genius nowadays, and renders real distinction impossible."

"Is that the reason you have thrown yourself into politics?" asked the count.

"It is the same thing in this sphere," said the poet; "there are no statesmen in these days, only men who handle events more or less. Look at it, monsieur; under the system of government that we derive from the Charter, which makes a tax-list of more importance than a coat-of-arms, there is absolutely nothing solid except that which you went to seek in China—wealth."

Satisfied with himself and with the impression he was making on the prospective father-in-law, Canalis turned to Germain.

"Serve the coffee in the salon," he said, inviting Monsieur de la Bastie to leave the dining-room.

"I thank you for this visit, Monsieur le Comte," said La Brière; "it saves me from the embarrassment of presenting my friend to you in your own house. With a kind heart you have also a quick mind."

"Bah! the ready wit of Provence, that is all," said Charles Mignon.

"Ah, do you come from Provence?" cried Canalis.

"You must pardon my friend," said La Brière; "he has not studied, as I have, the history of La Bastie."

At the word *friend* Canalis threw a searching glance at Ernest.

"If your health will permit," said the count to the poet, "I shall hope to receive you this evening under my roof; it will be a day to mark with a white stone. Though we cannot duly receive so distinguished a man in our little house, yet your visit will gratify the impatience of my daughter, whose admiration for your poems has even led her to set them to music."

"You have something better than fame in your house," said Canalis; "you have beauty, if I am to believe Ernest."

"Yes, a good daughter; but you will find her rather countrified," said Charles Mignon.

"A country girl sought, they say, by the Duc d'Hérouville," remarked Canalis, dryly.

"Oh!" replied Monsieur Mignon, with the perfidious good-humor of a Southerner, "I leave my daughter free. Dukes, princes, commoners — they are all the same to me, even men of genius. I shall make no pledges, and whoever my Modeste chooses will be my son-in-law, or rather my son," he added, looking at La Brière. "It could not be otherwise. Madame de la Bastie is German. She has never adopted our etiquette, and I allow myself to be led by her and my daughter. I have always preferred to sit in the carriage rather than on the box. We may make a joke of all this at present, for we have not yet seen the Duc d'Hérouville, and I do not believe in marriages arranged by proxy, any more than I believe in choosing my daughter's husband."

"That declaration is equally encouraging and discouraging to two young men who are searching for the philosopher's stone of happiness in marriage," said Canalis.

"Don't you consider it useful, necessary, and even politic to stipulate for perfect freedom of action for parents, daughters, and suitors?" asked Charles Mignon.

Canalis, at a sign from La Brière, kept silence. The conversation presently became unimportant, and after a few turns round the garden the count retired, urging a visit from the two friends.

"That's our dismissal," cried Canalis; "you saw it as plainly as I did. Well, in his place, I should not hesitate between the grand equerry and either of us, charming as we are."

"I don't think so," said La Brière. "I believe that frank soldier came here to satisfy his impatience to see you, and to inform us of his neutrality while receiving us in his house. Modeste, in love with your fame, and misled by my person, stands, as it were, between the real and the ideal, between poetry and prose. I am, unfortunately, the prose."

"Germain," said Canalis to the valet, who came to take away the coffee, "order the carriage in half an hour. We will take a drive before going to the Chalet."

XVIII.

The two young men were equally impatient to see Modeste, but La Brière dreaded the interview, while Canalis advanced to it with a confidence full of self-conceit. The eagerness with which La Brière had met the father, and the flattery by which he had caressed the family pride of the merchant, showed Canalis his own maladroitness, and determined him to select a special rôle. The great poet resolved to pretend indifference, though all the while displaying his seductive powers; to appear to disdain the young lady, and thus pique her self-love. Trained by the handsome Duchesse de Chaulieu, he was bound to be worthy of his reputation as a man who knew women, when, in fact, he did not know them at all—which is often the case with those who are the happy victims of an exclusive passion. While poor Ernest, silently ensconced in his corner of the calèche, gave way to the terrors of genuine love, and foresaw instinctively the anger, contempt, and disdain of an injured and offended young girl, Canalis was preparing himself, not less silently, like an actor making ready for an important part in a new play; certainly neither of them presented the appearance of a happy man. Important interests were at stake for Canalis. The mere suggestion of his desire to marry would bring about a rupture of the friendship which had bound him for the last ten years to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Though he had given as an excuse for his journey the commonplace pretext of fatigue—in which, by-the-by, women never believe, even when it is true—his conscience troubled him somewhat; but the word "conscience" seemed so jesuitical to La Brière that he shrugged his shoulders when the poet mentioned his scruples.

"Your conscience, my friend, strikes me as nothing more nor less than a dread of losing the pleasures of vanity as well as some very real advantages, by sacrificing the affections of Madame de Chaulieu; for, if you succeed with Modeste, you will renounce without any regret the wilted aftermath of a passion that has been mown and well-raked for eight years. If you simply mean that you are afraid of displeasing your protectress, should she find out the object of your stay here, I can easily believe you. To renounce the duchess and yet not succeed at the Chalet is too heavy a risk. You take the anxiety of this alternative for remorse."

"You have no comprehension of feelings," said the poet, irritably, like a man who hears truth when he expects a compliment.

"That is what a bigamist should tell the jury," retorted La Brière, laughing.

This epigram made another disagreeable impression on Canalis. He began to think La Brière too witty and independent for a secretary.

The arrival of an elegant calèche, driven by a coachman in the Canalis livery, created great excitement at the Chalet, for the two suitors were expected, and all the personages of this history were assembled to receive them, except the duke and Butscha.

"Which is the poet?" asked Madame Latournelle of Dumay in the embrasure of a window, where she stationed herself as soon as she heard the wheels.

"The one who walks like a drum-major," answered the lieutenant.

"Ah!" said the notary's wife, examining Canalis, who was walking like a man who knows he is being looked at. Although too severe, Dumay's criticism had a certain amount of justice. The fault lay with the great lady who flattered him incessantly and spoiled him, as all women older than their adorers invariably spoil and flatter them; Canalis in his moral being was a sort of Narcissus. When a woman of a certain age wishes to attach a man forever, she begins by deifying his defects, so as to render all rivalry impossible; for a rival is never, at the first approach, aware of the superfine flattery to which the man becomes so easily accustomed. Coxcombs are the product of this feminine maneuver, when they are not fops by nature. Canalis, chosen when young by the handsome duchess, vindicated his affectations to his own mind by telling himself that they pleased that *grande dame,* whose taste was law. Such shades of character may be excessively faint, but it is not impossible to point them out. For instance, Melchior possessed a talent for reading which was greatly admired, and much injudicious praise had given him a habit of exaggeration, which neither poets nor actors were willing to check, and which made people say of him (always through De Marsay) that he no longer declaimed, he bellowed his verses; lengthening the sounds that he might listen to himself. In the slang of the green-room, Canalis "dragged the time." He was fond of exchanging questioning glances with his hearers, throwing himself into postures of self-complacency and practicing those tricks of demeanor which actors call *balançoires*—the picturesque phrase of an artistic people. Canalis had his imitators, and was the head of a school of his kind. This habit of declamatory chanting had slightly affected his conversation, as we have seen in his interview with Dumay. The moment the mind becomes ultra-coquettish the manners follow suit, and the great poet ended by stepping rhythmically, inventing attitudes, looking furtively at himself in mirrors, and suiting his discourse to the particular pose which he happened to have taken up. He was so preoccupied with the effect he wished to produce, that a practical joker, Blondet, had bet once or twice, and won the wager, that he could disconcert him at any moment by merely looking fixedly at his hair, or his boots, or his coat-tails.

These graces, which started in life with a passport of flowery youth, now seemed all the more wornout because Melchior himself was waning. Life in the world of fashion is quite as exhausting to men as it is to women, and perhaps the twenty years by which the duchess exceeded Canalis's age, weighed more heavily upon him than upon her; for to the eyes of the world she was always handsome—without rouge, without wrinkles, and without heart. Alas! neither men nor women have friends who are friendly enough to warn them of the moment when the fragrance of their modesty grows stale, when a caressing glance is but a tradition of the stage, when the expression of the face changes from sentiment to sentimentality, and the artifices of the mind show their rusty edges. Genius alone renews its skin like a snake; and in the matter of charm, as in everything else, it is only the heart that never grows old. People who have hearts are simple in all things. Now Canalis, as we know, had a shriveled heart. He misused the beauty of his glance by giving it, without adequate reason, the fixity that comes to the eyes in meditation. In short, applause was to him a business, in which he demanded too much profit. His style of paying compliments, charming to superficial people, seemed insulting to others of more delicacy, by its triteness and the cool assurance of its flattery, which betrayed a purpose. As a matter of fact, Melchior lied like a courtier. He remarked without blushing to the Duc de Chaulieu, who made no impression whatever when he was obliged to address the Chamber as minister of foreign affairs, "Your excellency was truly sublime!" Many men like Canalis are purged of their affectations by the administration of non-success in little doses.

These defects, slight in the gilded

salons of the Faubourg Saint Germain, where every one contributes his or her quota of absurdity, and where these particular forms of exaggerated speech and affected diction—magniloquence, if you please to call it so—are framed by excessive luxury and sumptuous toilets, which are to some extent their excuse, were certain to be far more noticed in the provinces, whose own absurdities are of a totally different type. Canalis, by nature overstrained and artificial, could not change his form; he had had time to grow stiff in the mold into which the duchess had cast him; moreover, he was thoroughly Parisian, or, if you prefer it, truly French. The Parisian is amazed that everything everywhere is not as it is in Paris; the Frenchman, as it is in France. Good taste consists in conforming to the customs of foreigners without losing too much of our own character—as did Alcibiades, that model of a gentleman. True grace is elastic; it lends itself to all circumstances; it is in harmony with all social centers; it wears a robe of simple material in the streets, noticeable only by its cut, in preference to the feathers and brilliant flounces of middle-class vulgarity. Now Canalis, counseled by a woman who cared for him more on her own account than on his, wished to lay down the law and be, everywhere, such as he himself might see fit to be. He believed he carried his own public with him wherever he went—an error shared by several of the great men of Paris.

While the poet made a studied entrance into the salon of the Chalet, La Brière slipped in behind him like a puppy who expects a whipping.

"Ah! there is my soldier," said Canalis, perceiving Dumay, after addressing a compliment to Madame Mignon, and bowing to the other ladies. "Your anxieties are relieved, are they not?" he said, offering his hand effusively; "I comprehend them to their fullest extent after seeing mademoiselle. I spoke to you of terrestrial creatures, not of angels."

All present seemed by their attitudes to ask the meaning of this speech.

"I shall always consider it a triumph," resumed the poet, observing that every body wished for an explanation, "to have stirred to emotion one of those men of iron whom Napoleon had the eye to find and make the supporting piles on which he tried to build an empire, too colossal to be lasting: for such structures time alone is the cement. But this triumph—why should I be proud of it?—I count for nothing. It was the triumph of ideas over facts. Your battles, my dear Monsieur Dumay, your heroic charges, Monsieur le Comte, war itself, was the form in which Napoleon's idea clothed itself. Of all these things, what remains? The sod that covers them knows nothing; harvests do not betray their hiding place; were it not for the historian, the writer, futurity would have no knowledge of those heroic days. Therefore your fifteen years of war are now ideas and nothing more; that which will preserve the Empire forever will be the poem that the poets make of them. A nation that can win such battles must know how to sing them."

Canalis paused, to gather by a glance that ran round the circle the tribute of amazement which he expected of provincials.

"You cannot imagine, monsieur, the regret I feel at not seeing you," said Madame Mignon; "but you compensate me with the pleasure of hearing you."

Modeste, determined to think Canalis sublime, sat motionless with amazement; the embroidery slipped from her fingers, which held it only by the needleful of thread.

"Modeste, this is Monsieur Ernest de la Brière. Monsieur Ernest, my daughter," said the count, thinking the secretary too much in the background.

The young girl bowed coldly, giving Ernest a glance which was meant to prove to every one present that she saw him for the first time.

"Pardon me, monsieur," she said without blushing; "the great admiration I feel for the greatest of our poets is, in the eyes of my friends, a sufficient excuse for having seen only him."

The pure, fresh voice, with accents like the celebrated ones of Mademoiselle Mars, charmed the poor secretary, already dazzled by Modeste's beauty, and in his sudden surprise he answered by a phrase that would have been sublime, had it been true.

"He is my friend," he said.

"Ah, then you pardon me," she replied.

"He is more than a friend," cried Canalis, taking Ernest by the shoulder and leaning upon it like Alexander on Hephæstion, "we love each other as though we were brothers—"

Madame Latournelle cut short the poet's speech by pointing to Ernest and saying aloud to her husband, "Surely that is the gentleman we saw at church."

"Why not?" said Charles Mignon quickly, observing that Ernest reddened.

Modeste coldly took up her embroidery.

"Madame may be right; I have been twice in Havre lately," replied La Brière, sitting down by Dumay.

Canalis, charmed with Modeste's beauty, mistook the admiration she expressed, and flattered himself he had succeeded in producing his desired effects.

"I should think that a man of genius had no heart, if he had no devoted friend near him," said Modeste, to pick up the conversation interrupted by Madame Latournelle's awkwardness.

"Mademoiselle, Ernest's devotion makes me almost think myself worth something," said Canalis; "for my dear Pylades is full of talent; he was the right hand of the greatest minister we have had since the peace. Though he holds a fine position, he is good enough to be my tutor in the science of politics; he teaches me to conduct affairs and feeds me with his experience, when all the while he might aspire to a much better situation. Oh! he is worth far more than I." At a gesture from Modeste he continued gracefully: "Yes, the poetry that I express he carries in his heart; and if I speak thus openly before him it is because he has the modesty of a nun."

"Enough, oh, enough!" cried La Brière, who hardly knew which way to look. "My dear Canalis, you remind me of a mother who is seeking to marry off her daughter."

"How is it, monsieur," said Charles Mignon, addressing Canalis, "that you can even think of becoming a political character?"

"It is abdication," said Modeste, "for a poet; politics are the resource of matter-of-fact men."

"Ah, mademoiselle, the rostrum is to-day the greatest theater of the world; it has replaced the tournaments of chivalry; it is now the meeting-place for all intellects, just as the army has been the rallying-point of courage."

Canalis stuck spurs into his charger and talked for ten minutes on political life: "Poetry was but a preface to the statesman." "To-day the orator has become a sublime reasoner, the shepherd of ideas." "Although a poet may point the way for nations or individuals, can he ever therefore cease to be himself?" He quoted Chateaubriand and declared he would one day be greater on the political side than on the literary. "The forum of France was to be the pharos of humanity." "Oral battles supplanted fields of battle: there were sessions of the Chamber finer than any Austerlitz, and orators were seen to be as lofty as generals; they spent their lives, their courage, their strength, as freely as those who went to war." "Speech was surely one of the most prodigal wastes of the vital fluid that man had ever known," etc.

This improvisation of modern commonplaces, clothed in sonorous phrases and newly invented words, and intended to prove that the Comte de Canalis was becoming one of the glories of the French Government, made a deep impression upon the notary and Gobenheim, and upon Madame Latournelle and Madame Mignon. Modeste looked as though she were at the theater, in an attitude of enthusiasm for an actor—very much like that of Ernest toward herself; for though the secretary knew all these high-sounding phrases by heart, he listened through the eyes, as it were, of the young girl, and grew more and more madly in love with her. To this true lover, Modeste

was eclipsing all the Modestes whom he had created as he read her letters and answered them.

This visit, whose length was predetermined by Canalis, careful not to allow his admirers a chance to get surfeited, ended by an invitation to dinner on the following Monday.

"We shall not be at the Chalet," said the Comte de la Bastie. "Dumay will have sole possession of it. I return to the villa, having bought it back under a deed of redemption within six months, which I have to-day signed with Monsieur Vilquin."

"I hope," said Dumay, "that Vilquin will not be able to return you the sum you have just lent him, and that the villa will remain yours."

"It is an abode in keeping with your fortune," said Canalis.

"You mean the fortune that I am supposed to have," replied Charles Mignon, hastily.

"It would be too sad," said Canalis, turning to Modeste with a charming little bow, "if this Madonna were not framed in a manner worthy of her divine perfections."

That was the only thing Canalis said to Modeste. He affected not to look at her, and behaved like a man to whom all idea of marriage was interdicted.

"Ah! my dear Madame Mignon," cried the notary's wife, as soon as the gravel was heard to grit under the feet of the Parisians, "what an intellect!"

"Is he rich?—that is the question," said Gobenheim.

Modeste was at the window, not losing a single movement of the great poet, and paying no attention to his companion. When Monsieur Mignon returned to the salon, and Modeste, having received a last bow from the two friends as the carriage turned, went back to her seat, a weighty discussion took place, such as provincials invariably hold over Parisians after a first interview. Gobenheim repeated his phrase, "Is he rich?" as a chorus to the songs of praise sung by Madame Latournelle, Modeste, and her mother.

"Rich!" exclaimed Modeste; "what can that signify! Do you not see that Monsieur de Canalis is one of those men who are destined to occupy the highest places in the State? He has more than fortune; he possesses that which gains fortune."

"He will be a minister or an embassador," said Monsieur Mignon.

"That won't hinder tax-payers from having to pay the costs of his funeral," remarked the notary.

"How so?" asked Charles Mignon.

"He strikes me as a man who will waste all the fortunes with whose gifts Mademoiselle Modeste so liberally endows him," answered Latournelle.

"Modeste can't avoid being liberal to a poet who called her a Madonna," said Dumay, sneeringly. He was faithful to the repulsion with which Canalis had inspired him.

Gobenheim arranged the whist-table with all the more persistency because, since the return of Monsieur Mignon, Latournelle and Dumay had allowed themselves to play for ten sous points.

"Well, my little darling," said the father to the daughter in the embrasure of a window, "confess that papa thinks of everything. If you send your orders this evening to your former dressmaker in Paris, and all your other furnishing people, you shall show yourself eight days hence in all the splendor of an heiress. Meantime we will install ourselves in the villa. You already have a pretty horse; remember to order a habit; you owe that amount of civility to the grand equerry."

"All the more because there will be a number of us to ride," said Modeste, whose cheeks were regaining the hue of health.

"The secretary did not say much," remarked Madame Mignon.

"He is a little fool," said Madame Latournelle; "the poet had an attentive word for everybody. He thanked Monsieur Latournelle for his help in choosing the house; and said to me that it seemed as if had consulted a woman of taste. But the other looked as gloomy as a Span-

iard, and kept his eyes fixed on Modeste as though he would like to swallow her whole. If he had looked at me I should have been afraid of him."

"He had a pleasant voice," said Madame Mignon.

"No doubt he came to Havre to inquire about the Mignons in the interests of his friend the poet," said Modeste, looking furtively at her father. "It was certainly he whom we saw in church."

Madame Dumay and Monsieur and Madame Latournelle accepted this as the natural explanation of Ernest's journey.

XIX.

"Do you know, Ernest," cried Canalis, when they had driven a short distance from the house, "I have never seen a marriageable woman in society in Paris who compares with that adorable girl."

"Ah, that ends it!" replied Ernest, bitterly. "She loves you, or she will love you if you desire it. Your fame won half the battle. You will have everything your own way. You shall go there alone in future. Modeste despises me; she is right; and I don't see any reason why I should condemn myself to the torture of seeing, admiring, desiring and adoring that which I can never possess."

After a few consoling remarks, dashed with his own satisfaction at having made a new version of Cæsar's phrase, Canalis confided to him a desire to break with the Duchesse de Chaulieu. La Brière, totally unable to keep up the conversation, made the beauty of the night an excuse to be set down, and then rushed, like one possessed, to the seashore, where he stayed till past ten, half crazy, walking hurriedly up and down, talking aloud in broken sentences, standing still or sitting down, without noticing the uneasiness which he was giving two custom-house officers who were on the watch. After loving Modeste's wit and intellect and her aggressive frankness, he now joined adoration of her beauty—that is to say, love without reason, love inexplicable—to all the other reasons which had drawn him, ten days before, to the church in Havre.

He returned to the Chalet, where the Pyrenees hounds barked at him till he was forced to relinquish the pleasure of gazing at Modeste's windows. In love, such things are of no more account to the lover than the work which is covered by the last layer of color is to an artist; yet out of them arise the great painter and the true lover whom the woman and the public end, often too late, by adoring.

"Well, then!" he cried aloud, "I will stay, I will suffer, I will love her for myself alone, egotistically. Modeste shall be my sun, my life; I will breathe with her breath, rejoice in her joys and bear her griefs, even were she the wife of that egoist, Canalis."

"Is that what love is, monsieur?" said a voice which came from a shrub by the side of the road. "Ha, ha, so all the world is in love with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?"

And Butscha suddenly appeared and looked at La Brière. La Brière checked his anger when, by the light of the moon, he saw the dwarf, and he made a few steps without replying.

"Soldiers who serve in the same company ought to be better comrades than that," remarked Butscha. "You don't love Canalis; neither do I."

"He is my friend," replied Ernest.

"Ha, you are the little secretary?"

"You are to know, monsieur, that I am no man's secretary. I have the honor to be counsel to one of the supreme courts of this kingdom."

"I have the honor to salute Monsieur de la Brière," said Butscha. "I myself have the honor to be head clerk to Latournelle, chief councilor of Havre, and my position is a better one than yours. Yes, I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie nearly every evening for the last four years, and I expect to live near her, as a king's servant lives in the Tuileries. If they offered me the throne of Russia I should answer, 'I love the sun too well.' Isn't that telling you, monsieur, that I care more for her than for myself, in all honor? Do you

believe that the proud Duchesse de Chaulieu will cast a favorable eye on the happiness of Madame de Canalis, since her waiting-woman, who is in love with Monsieur Germain, already uneasy at that charming valet's absence in Havre, has complained to her mistress while brushing her hair—"

"How do you know all this?" said La Brière, interrupting Butscha.

"In the first place, I am clerk to a notary," answered Butscha. "But haven't you seen my hump? It is full of resources, monsieur. I have made myself cousin to Mademoiselle Philoxène Jacmin, born at Honfleur, where my mother was born, a Jacmin—there are eleven branches of the Jacmins at Honfleur. So my cousin Philoxène, enticed by the bait of a highly improbable fortune, has told me a good many things."

"The duchess is vindictive?" said La Brière.

"Vindictive as a queen, Philoxène says; she has never yet forgiven the duke for being nothing more than her husband," replied Butscha. "She hates as she loves. I know all about her character, her tastes, her toilet, her religion, and her meannesses; for Philoxène stripped her for me, soul and corset. I went to the opera expressly to see her, and I didn't grudge the ten francs it cost me—I don't mean the play. If my imaginary cousin had not told me the duchess had seen her fifty summers, I should have thought I was overgenerous in giving her thirty; she has never known a winter, that duchess!"

"Yes," said La Brière, "she is a cameo—preserved because it is stone. Canalis would be in a bad way if the duchess were to find out what he is doing here; and I hope, monsieur, that you will go no further in this business of spying, which is unworthy of an honest man."

"Monsieur," said Butscha, proudly; "for me Modeste is my country. I do not spy; I foresee. The duchess will come here if it is desirable, or she will stay tranquilly where she is, according to what I judge best."

"You?"

"I."

"And how, pray?"

"Ha, that's it!" said the little hunchback, plucking a blade of grass. "See here! this herb believes that men build palaces for it to grow in; it wedges its way between the closest blocks of marble, and brings them down, just as the people, forced into the edifice of feudality, have brought it to the ground. The power of the feeble life that can creep everywhere is greater than that of the mighty who rely upon their cannons. I am one of three who have sworn that Modeste shall be happy, and we would sell our honor for her. Adieu, monsieur. If you truly love Mademoiselle de la Bastie, forget this conversation and shake hands with me, for I think you've got a heart. I longed to see the Chalet, and I got here just as *she* was putting out her light. I saw the dogs rush at you, and I overheard your words, and that is why I take the liberty of saying we serve in the same regiment—that of loyal devotion."

"Monsieur," said La Brière, wringing the hunchback's hand, "would you have the friendliness to tell me if Mademoiselle Modeste ever loved any one *with love* before she wrote to Canalis?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Butscha, in an altered voice; "that thought is an insult. And even now, who knows if she really loves? does she know herself? She is enamored of genius, of the soul of that seller of verses, that literary quack; but she will study him, we shall all study him; and I know how to make the man's real character peep out from under that turtle-shell of fine manners—we'll soon see the petty little head of his ambition and his vanity!" cried Butscha, rubbing his hands. "So, unless mademoiselle is desperately taken with him—"

"Oh! she was seized with admiration when she saw him, as if he were something marvelous," exclaimed La Brière, letting the secret of his jealousy escape him.

"If he is a loyal, honest fellow, and if he loves her; if he is worthy of her; if he renounces his duchess," said Butscha—"then I'll manage the duchess! Here,

my dear sir, take this road, and you will get home in ten minutes."

Butscha almost immediately turned back and hailed poor Ernest, who, as a true lover, would gladly have stayed there all night talking of Modeste.

"Monsieur," said Butscha, "I have not yet had the honor of seeing our great poet. I am very curious to observe that magnificent phenomenon in the exercise of his functions. Do me the favor to bring him to the Chalet to-morrow evening, and stay as long as possible; for it takes more than an hour for a man to show himself for what he is. I shall be the first to see if he loves, if he can love, or if he ever will love Mademoiselle Modeste."

"You are very young to—"

"—to be a professor," said Butscha, interrupting La Brière. "Ha, monsieur, deformed folks are all born a hundred years old. And besides, a sick man who has long been sick knows more than his doctor; he knows the disease, and that is more than can always be said even for the best of doctors. Well, so it is with a man who cherishes a woman in his heart, when the woman is forced to disdain him for his ugliness or his deformity; he ends by knowing so much of love that he becomes seductive, just as the sick man recovers his health; stupidity alone is incurable. I have had neither father nor mother since I was six years old; I am now twenty-five. Public charity has been my mother, the procureur du roi my father. Oh! don't be troubled," he added, seeing Ernest's gesture; "I am much more lively than my situation. Well, for the last six years, ever since a woman's insolent eye first told me I had no right to love, I do love, and I study women. I began with the ugly ones, for it is best to take the bull by the horns. So I took my master's wife, who has certainly been an angel to me, for my first study. Perhaps I did wrong; but I couldn't help it. I passed her through my alembic and what did I find? this thought, crouching at the bottom of her heart, 'I am not so ugly as they think me;' and if a man were to work upon that thought he could bring her to the edge of an abyss, pious as she is."

"And have you studied Modeste?"

"I thought I told you," replied Butscha, "that my life belongs to her, just as France belongs to the king. Do you now understand what you called my spying in Paris? No one but me really knows what nobility, what pride, what devotion, what mysterious grace, what unwearying kindness, what true religion, gayety, wit, delicacy, knowledge, and courtesy there are in the soul and in the heart of that adorable creature!"

Butscha drew out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes, and La Brière pressed his hand earnestly.

"I live in the sunshine of her existence; it comes from her, it is absorbed in me; that is how we are united—as nature is to God, by the Light and the Word. Adieu, monsieur; I have never talked so much in my life; but seeing you beneath her windows, I knew that you loved her as I love her."

Without waiting for an answer Butscha quitted the poor lover, whose heart had been comforted by his words. Ernest resolved to make a friend of him, not suspecting that the chief object of the clerk's loquacity was to gain communication with some one connected with Canalis. Ernest was rocked to sleep that night by the ebb and flow of thoughts and resolutions and plans for his future conduct, while Canalis slept the sleep of the conqueror, which is the sweetest of slumbers after that of the just.

At breakfast the friends agreed to spend the evening of the following day at the Chalet and initiate themselves into the delights of provincial whist. To get rid of the day they had their horses saddled, and started on a voyage of discovery round the country, which was quite as unknown to them as China; for the most foreign thing to Frenchmen in France is France itself.

By dint of reflecting on his position as an unfortunate and despised lover, Ernest went through something of the same process as Modeste's first letter had forced upon him. Though sorrow is said to

develop the virtues, it only develops them in virtuous persons; that cleansing of the conscience takes place only in persons who are naturally neat. La Brière vowed to endure his sufferings in Spartan silence, to act worthily, and give way to no baseness; while Canalis, fascinated by the enormous *dot,* was promising himself to take every means of captivating the heiress. Selfishness and devotion, the key-notes of the two characters, therefore took, by the action of a moral law which is often very odd in its effects, certain measures that were contrary to their natures. The selfish man put on self-abnegation; the man who thought chiefly of others took refuge on the Mount Aventinus of pride. That phenomenon is often seen in political life, also Men frequently turn their characters wrong side out, and it sometimes happens that the public is unable to tell which is the right side.

After dinner the two friends heard through Germain of the arrival of the grand equerry, who was presented at the Chalet the same evening by Latournelle. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville had contrived to wound that worthy man by sending a footman to tell him to come to her, instead of sending her nephew in person; thus depriving the notary of a distinguished visit of which he would certainly have boasted for the rest of his natural life. So Latournelle curtly informed the grand equerry, when he proposed to drive him to the Chalet, that he was engaged to take Madame Latournelle. Guessing from the little man's sulky manner that there was some blunder to repair, the duke said graciously:—

"Then I shall have the pleasure, if you will allow me, of taking Madame Latournelle also."

Disregarding Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's haughty shrug, the duke left the room with the notary. Madame Latournelle, half-crazed with joy at seeing the gorgeous carriage at her door, with footmen in royal livery letting down the steps, was too agitated on hearing that the grand equerry had called for her, to find her gloves, her parasol, her absurdity, or her usual air of pompous dignity. Once in the carriage, however, and while expressing confused thanks and civilities to the little duke, she suddenly exclaimed, good naturedly—

"But Butscha, where is he?"

"Let us take Butscha," said the duke, smiling.

When the people on the quays, attracted by the splendor of the royal equipage, saw the three little men with the spare gigantic woman, they looked at one another and laughed.

"If you melt all three together, they might make one man fit to mate with that big cod-fish," said a sailor from Bordeaux.

"Is there any other thing you would like to take with you, madame?" asked the duke, jestingly, while the footman waited his orders.

"No, monseigneur," she replied, turning scarlet and looking at her husband as much as to say, "What did I do that was so wrong?"

"Monsieur le Duc honors me by considering that I am a thing," said Butscha; "a poor clerk is usually thought to be a nonentity."

Though this was said laughingly, the duke colored and did not answer. Great people are always wrong in joking with their social inferiors. Jesting is a game, and games presuppose equality; it is to obviate any inconvenient results of this temporary equality that players have the right, after the game is over, not to recognize each other.

The visit of the grand equerry had the ostensible excuse of an important piece of business; namely, the retrieval of an immense tract of waste land left by the sea between the mouths of the two rivers, the title to which had just been adjudged by the Council of State to the house of Hérouville. The matter was nothing less than putting flood-gates with double bridges, draining three or four hundred acres, cutting canals, and laying out roads. When the duke had explained the condition of the land, Charles Mignon remarked that it would be necessary to wait until the soil, which was still moving, should settle naturally.

"Time, which has providentially enriched your house, Monsieur le Duc, can alone complete the work," he said, in conclusion. "It would be prudent to let fifty years elapse before you reclaim the land."

"Do not let that be your final word, Monsieur le Comte," said the duke. "Come to Hérouville and see things for yourself."

Charles Mignon replied that every capitalist should examine such matters with a cool head, thus giving the duke a pretext for his visits to the Chalet. The sight of Modeste made a vivid impression on the young man, and he asked the favor of receiving her at Hérouville, saying that his sister and his aunt had heard much of her, and wished to make her acquaintance. On this the count proposed to present his daughter to those ladies himself, and invited the whole party to dinner on the day of his return to the villa. The duke accepted the invitation. The sight of the blue ribbon, the title, and, above all, the ecstatic glances of the nobleman had an effect upon Modeste; but she appeared to great advantage in carriage, dignity, and conversation. The duke withdrew reluctantly, carrying with him an invitation to visit the Chalet every evening—an invitation based on the recognized impossibility of a courtier of Charles X. existing for a single evening without his rubber.

The following evening, therefore, Modeste was to see all three of her lovers. No matter what young girls may say, and though the logic of the heart may lead them to sacrifice everything to preference, it is extremely flattering to their self-love to see a number of rival adorers around them—distinguished or celebrated men, or men of ancient lineage—all endeavoring to shine and to please. Although it may not be to Modeste's credit, yet it must be told she subsequently admitted that the sentiments expressed in her letters paled before the pleasure of setting three such different minds at war with one another—three men who, taken separately, would each have done honor to the most exacting family. Yet this luxury of self-love was checked in her by a misanthropical spitefulness, resulting from the terrible wound which, however, already seemed to her only a disappointment. So when her father said to her, laughing, "Well, Modeste, do you want to be a duchess?" she answered, with a mocking curtsey—

"Sorrows have made me philosophical."

"Do you mean to be only a baroness?" asked Butscha.

"Or a viscountess?" said her father.

"How could that be?" she asked quickly.

"If you should accept Monsieur de la Brière, he would have enough influence to obtain permission from the king to bear my titles and arms."

"Oh, if it comes to disguising himself, *he* will not make any difficulty," said Modeste, scornfully.

Butscha did not understand this epigram, whose meaning could only be guessed by Monsieur and Madame Mignon and Dumay.

"When it is a question of marriage, all men disguise themselves," remarked Madame Latournelle, "and women set them the example. I've heard it said all my life that 'Monsieur this or Mademoiselle that has made a good marriage;'—does that mean that the other side had made a bad one?"

"Marriage," said Butscha, "is like a lawsuit; there's always one side discontented. If one dupes the other, certainly half the married people in the world are playing a comedy at the expense of the other half."

"From which you conclude, Sieur Butscha?" inquired Modeste.

"To pay the strictest attention to the maneuvers of the enemy," answered the clerk.

"What did I tell you, my darling?" said Charles Mignon, alluding to their conversation on the seashore.

"Men play as many parts to get married as mothers make their daughters play to get rid of them," said Latournelle.

"Then you approve of stratagems?" said Modeste.

"On both sides," cried Gobenheim, "and that brings it even."

This conversation was carried on interruptedly, in the intervals of cutting and dealing the cards, and was interspersed with appreciative remarks upon the merits of the Duc d'Hérouville, who was approved of by little Latournelle, little Dumay, and little Butscha.

"I see," said Madame Mignon with a smile, "that Madame Latournelle and my poor husband are giants here."

"Fortunately for him, the colonel is not very tall," replied Butscha, while his patron dealt the cards, "for a tall and intelligent man is always an exception."

Without the foregoing discussion on the lawfulness of matrimonial tricks, the reader might possibly find the forthcoming account of the evening so impatiently awaited by Butscha somewhat too long.

Desplein, the famous surgeon, arrived the next morning, and stayed only long enough to send to Havre for fresh horses and have them put-to, which took about an hour. After examining Madame Mignon's eyes, he decided that she could recover her sight, and fixed a suitable time, a month later, to perform the operation. This important consultation took place before the assembled members of the Chalet, who stood trembling and expectant to hear the decree of the prince of science. That illustrious member of the Academy of Sciences put about a dozen brief questions to the blind woman as he examined her eyes in the strong light from a window. Modeste was amazed at the value which a man so celebrated attached to time, when she saw the traveling-carriage piled with books which the great surgeon proposed to read during the journey; for he had left Paris the evening before, and had spent the night in sleeping and traveling. The rapidity and clearness of Desplein's judgment on each answer made by Madame Mignon, his succinct tone, his decisive manner, gave Modeste her first real idea of a man of genius. She perceived the enormous difference between a second-rate man, like Canalis, and Desplein, who was even more than a superior man. A man of genius finds in the consciousness of his talent and in the solidity of his fame an arena of his own, where his legitimate pride can expand and exercise itself without troubling any one. Moreover, his perpetual struggle with men and things leaves him no time for the coquetries of fashionable heroes, who make haste to gather in the harvests of a fugitive season, and whose vanity and self-love are as petty and exacting as a custom-house which levies tithes on all that comes in its way.

Modeste was the more enchanted by this great practician, because he was evidently charmed with her own exquisite beauty—he, through whose hands so many women passed, and who had long since examined the sex, as it were, with magnifier and scalpel.

"It would be a sad pity," he said, with an air of gallantry which he knew well enough how to use, and which contrasted with his assumed bruskness, "if a mother were deprived of the sight of so charming a daughter."

Modeste insisted on serving the simple breakfast which was all the great surgeon would accept. She, with her father and Dumay, accompanied the great surgeon, who was longingly expected by so many invalids, to the carriage stationed at the garden-gate, and said to Desplein, her eyes shining with hope—

"And will my dear mamma really see me?"

"Yes, my little sprite, I'll promise you that," he answered, smiling; "and I am incapable of deceiving you, for I, too, have a daughter."

The horses started and carried him off as he uttered the last words with unexpected grace and feeling. Nothing is more charming than that unexpectedness which is peculiar to persons of talent.

XX.

The visit of the great surgeon was the event of the day, and it left a luminous reflection in Modeste's soul. The young enthusiast ardently admired the man

whose life belonged to every one, and in whom the habit of studying physical suffering had destroyed the manifestations of egoism. That evening, when Gobenheim, the Latournelles, and Butscha, Canalis, Ernest, and the Duc d'Hérouville were assembled in the salon, they all congratulated the Mignon family on the good report given by Desplein. The conversation, in which the Modeste of her letters was once more in the ascendant, turned naturally on the man whose genius, unfortunately for his fame, was appreciable only by the faculty and men of science. Gobenheim contributed a phrase which is in our day the sacred chrism of genius in the minds of public economists and bankers—

"He makes a mint of money."

"They say he is very grasping," added Canalis.

The praises which Modeste showered on Desplein disturbed the poet. Vanity acts like a woman—they both think they are defrauded when love or praise is bestowed on others. Voltaire was jealous of the wit of a roué whom Paris admired for two days, just as a duchess takes offense at a look bestowed upon her maid. The avarice excited by these two sentiments is such that a fraction of them given to the poor is thought robbery.

"Do you think, monsieur," said Modeste, smiling, "that we can judge genius by ordinary standards?"

"Perhaps it would be necessary, first of all, to define the man of genius," replied Canalis. "One of the conditions of genius is invention—invention of a form, a system, a force. Napoleon was an inventor, apart from his other conditions of genius. He invented his method of making war. Walter Scott is an inventor, Linnæus is an inventor, Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier are inventors. Such men are men of genius of the first rank. They renew, increase, or modify both science and art. But Desplein is merely a man whose vast talent consists in properly applying laws already known; in observing, by means of a natural gift, the limits of each temperament, and the time appointed by Nature for performing an operation. He has not founded, like Hippocrates, the science itself. He has invented no system, as did Galen, Broussais, and Rasori. He is merely an executive genius, like Moscheles on the piano, Paganini on the violin, or Farinelli on his own larynx—men who have developed enormous faculties, but who have not created music. You must permit me to discriminate between Beethoven and La Catalani: to one belongs the immortal crown of genius and of martyrdom, to the other innumerable five-franc pieces; one we can pay in coin, but the world remains forever a debtor to the other. Each day increases our debt to Molière, but we have more than paid Baron."

"I think, my friend, that you lay too much stress upon beautiful ideas," said Ernest de la Brière, in a quiet and melodious voice, which formed a sudden contrast to the peremptory tones of the poet, whose flexible organ had abandoned its caressing tones for the strident and magisterial voice of the rostrum. "Genius must be estimated, first of all, according to its utility; and Parmentier, who brought potatoes into general use; Jacquart, the inventor of silk looms; Papin, who first discovered the elastic quality of steam, are also men of genius, to whom statues will some day be erected. They have changed, or they will change, in a certain sense, the face of the country. In that sense, Desplein will always be considered a man of genius by thinkers who see him attended by a generation of sufferers whose pains are stilled by his powerful hand."

That Ernest should give utterance to this opinion was enough to make Modeste oppose it.

"If that be so, monsieur," she said, "then the man who could discover a way to mow wheat without injuring the straw, by a machine that could do the work of ten men, would be a man of genius."

"Yes, my daughter," said Madame Mignon; "and the poor would bless him for cheaper bread—and he that is blessed by the poor is blessed of God."

"That is putting utility above art," said Modeste, shaking her head.

"Without utility what would become of art?" said Charles Mignon. "What would it rest on? what would it live on? Where would you lodge, and how would you pay the poet?"

"Oh! my dear papa, such opinions are fearfully flat and commonplace! I am not surprised that Gobenheim and Monsieur de la Brière, who are interested in the solution of social problems, should think so; but you, whose life has been the most useless poetry of the century—since the blood you shed all over Europe, and the horrible sufferings exacted by your colossus, did not prevent France from losing ten departments acquired under the Republic—how can *you* give in to such excessively pig-tail notions, as the idealists say? It is plain you've just come from China."

The impertinence of Modeste's speech was heightened by a little scornful and disdainful tone, which she purposely assumed, and which fairly astounded Madame Mignon, Madame Latournelle and Dumay. As for Madame Latournelle, although she opened her eyes wide, she did not understand it. Butscha, whose alert attention was comparable to that of a spy, looked at Monsieur Mignon, significantly, as he saw him flush with sudden and violent indignation.

"A little more, young lady, and you will be wanting in respect for your father," said the colonel, smiling, and understanding Butscha's look. "See what it is to spoil one's children!"

"I am your only child," she replied, saucily.

"Child, indeed," remarked the notary, significantly.

"Monsieur," said Modeste, dryly, "my father is delighted to have me for his governess; he gave me life and I give him knowledge; he will soon owe me something."

"There is a time and a manner for everything," said Madame Mignon.

"But mademoiselle is right," said Canalis, rising and standing before the fireplace in one of the finest attitudes of his collection. "God, in His providence, has given food and clothing to man, but He has not directly given him art. He says to man: 'To live, thou must bow thyself to earth; to think, thou shalt raise thyself to Me.' We have as much need of the life of the soul as of the life of the body—hence, there are two utilities. It is true we cannot be shod by books. An epic song is not, from a utilitarian point of view, as useful as the broth of a charity kitchen. The noblest ideas would scarcely replace the sail of a ship. It is quite true that the cotton-gin gives us calicoes for thirty sous a yard less than we ever paid before; but that machine and all other industrial perfections will not breathe the breath of life into a people, will not tell futurity of a civilization that once existed. While Egyptian, Mexican, Grecian, and Roman art, with their masterpieces—now called useless!—reveal the existence of races in the vast space of time, where the great intermediary nations, denuded of men of genius, have disappeared, leaving not a line nor a trace behind them! The works of genius are the *summum* of civilization, and presuppose utility. Surely a pair of boots are not as agreeable to your eyes as a fine play at the theater; and you would not prefer a wind-mill to the church of Saint-Ouen? Well, then, nations are imbued with the same feelings as individual men, and a man's cherished desire is to survive himself morally just as he propagates himself physically. The survival of a people is the work of its men of genius. At this very moment France is proving, energetically, the truth of that theory. She is, undoubtedly, excelled by England in commerce, industry, and navigation, and yet she is, I believe, at the head of the world—by reason of her artists, her men of talent, and the good taste of her products. There is no artist and no superior intellect that does not come to Paris for a diploma. There is no school of painting at this moment but that of France; and we shall reign far longer and perhaps more surely by our books than by our swords. In La Brière's system, on the other hand, all that is glorious and lovely must be suppressed—woman's beauty, mu-

sic, painting, poetry. Society will not be overthrown, it is true, but, I ask you, who would willingly accept such a life? All that is useful is ugly and forbidding. A kitchen is indispensable, but you take care not to sit there; you live in the salon, which you adorn, like this one, with things which are perfectly useless. Of what *use*, let me ask you, are these charming wall-paintings, this carved wood-work? There is nothing beautiful but that which seems to us useless. We called the sixteenth century the Renaissance with admirable truth of expression. That century was the dawn of a new era. Men will continue to speak of it when all remembrance of anterior centuries has passed away—their only merit being that they once existed, like the million beings who do not count in a generation."

"We may be rubbish, but my rubbish is dear to me," said the Duc d'Hérouville, laughingly, in the silent pause which followed the poet's pompous oration.

"Let me ask," said Butscha, attacking Canalis, "does art, the sphere in which, according to you, genius is required to evolve itself, exist at all? Is it not a splendid lie, a delusion, of the social man? Do I want a landscape scene of Normandy in my bedroom when I can look out and see a better one done by God Himself? Our dreams make poems more glorious than Iliads. For an insignificant sum of money I can find at Valogne, at Carentan, in Provence, or at Arles, many a Venus as beautiful as those of Titian. The police gazette publishes tales, differing somewhat from those of Walter Scott, but ending tragically with real blood, not ink. Happiness and virtue exist above and beyond both art and genius."

"Bravo, Butscha!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What did he say?" asked Canalis of La Brière, ceasing to gather from the eyes and attitude of Mademoiselle Mignon the charming signs of artless admiration. The contemptuous indifference which Modeste had exhibited toward La Brière, and above all, her disrespectful speeches to her father, had so saddened the young man that he made no answer to Canalis; his eyes, fixed sorrowfully on Modeste, were full of deep meditation. The Duc d'Hérouville took up Butscha's argument and reproduced it with much intelligence, saying finally that the ecstasies of Saint-Theresa were far superior to the creations of Lord Byron.

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc," exclaimed Modeste, "hers was a purely personal poetry, whereas the genius of Lord Byron and Molière benefit the world."

"How do you reconcile that opinion with those of Monsieur le Baron?" cried Charles Mignon, quickly. "Now you are insisting that genius must be useful, and benefit the world as absolutely as cotton—but perhaps you think logic as flat as your poor old father?"

Butscha, La Brière, and Madame Latournelle exchanged glances that were more than half derisive, and drove Modeste to a pitch of irritation that kept her silent for a moment.

"Mademoiselle, do not mind them," said Canalis, smiling upon her, "we are neither beaten, nor caught in a contradiction. Every work of art, let it be in literature, music, painting, sculpture, or architecture, implies a positive social utility, equal to that of all other commercial products. Art is pre-eminently commerce; it presupposes it. A book nowadays brings an author ten thousand francs; the making of books means the manufactory of paper, a foundry, a printing office, a bookseller—in other words, the employment of thousands of men. The execution of a symphony of Beethoven or an opera by Rossini requires an equal number of human arms and machinery and manufactures. The cost of a monument is an almost brutal case in point. In short, I may say that the works of genius have an extremely costly basis, and are, necessarily, useful to the workingman."

Astride of that theme, Canalis spoke for some minutes with a fine luxury of metaphor, and much inward complacency as to his phrases; but it happened with him, as with many another great speaker,

that he found himself at last at the point from which the conversation started, and in full agreement with La Brière, without perceiving it.

"I see with much pleasure, my dear baron," said the little duke, slyly, "that you will make an admirable constitutional minister."

"Oh!" said Canalis, with the gesture of a great man, "what do we prove by all these discussions? Only the eternal verity of one axiom: All things are true, all things are false. Moral truths as well as human beings change their aspect according to their surroundings, to the point of being actually unrecognizable."

"Society lives upon settled opinions," said the Duc d'Hérouville.

"What laxity!" whispered Madame Latournelle to her husband.

"He is a poet," said Gobenheim, who overheard her.

Canalis, who was ten leagues above the heads of his audience, and who may have been right in his last philosophical remark, took the sort of coldness which now overspread the surrounding faces for a symptom of provincial ignorance; but seeing that Modeste understood him, he was content, being wholly unaware that monologue is particularly disagreeable to country-folk, whose principal desire it is to exhibit to Parisians the manner of life and the wit and wisdom of the provinces.

"Is it long since you have seen the Duchesse de Chaulieu?" asked the duke, addressing Canalis, in order to change the conversation.

"I left her about six days ago."

"Is she well?" persisted the duke.

"Perfectly well."

"Have the kindness to remember me to her when you write."

"Do they call her charming," asked Modeste, addressing the duke.

"Monsieur le Baron can speak more intelligently than I, upon that point," replied the grand equerry.

"She is more than charming," said Canalis, making the best of the duke's perfidy; "but I am partial, mademoiselle; she has been a friend to me for the last ten years; I owe all that is good in me to her; she has saved me from the dangers of the world. Moreover, Monsieur le Duc de Chaulieu launched me in my present career. Without the influence of that family the king and the princesses would have often forgotten a poor poet like me; therefore my affection for the duchess must always be full of gratitude."

His voice quivered.

"We ought to love the woman who has led you to write those sublime poems, and who inspires you with such noble feelings," said Modeste, quite affected. "Who can think of a poet without a muse!"

"He would be without a heart," replied Canalis. "He would write barren verses, like Voltaire, who never loved any one but Voltaire."

"I thought you did me the honor to say, in Paris," interrupted Dumay, "that you never felt the sentiments you expressed."

"The shoe fits, my soldier," replied the poet, smiling; "but let me tell you that it is quite possible to have a great deal of feeling both in the intellectual life and in real life. It is possible to express fine sentiments without feeling them, and to feel them without being able to express them. My good friend here, La Brière, is madly in love," continued Canalis, with a fine show of generosity, looking at Modeste. "I, who certainly love as much as he, could, unless I deceive myself, give my love a literary form in harmony with its power. But I dare not say, mademoiselle," he added, turning to Modeste with too studied a grace, "that to-morrow I may not be without any wits at all."

Thus the poet triumphed over all obstacles. In honor of his love he rode a-tilt at the hindrances that were thrown in his way, and Modeste remained wonderstruck at the Parisian wit that scintillated in his declamatory discourse, of which she had hitherto known little or nothing.

"What an acrobat!" whispered Butscha to Latournelle, after listening to a magnificent tirade on the Catholic religion and the happiness of having a pious wife

—served up in response to a remark by Madame Mignon.

Modeste's eyes were blindfolded; Canalis's elocution and the close attention which she was predetermined to pay to him prevented her from seeing that Butscha was carefully noting the declamation, the want of simplicity, the emphasis that took the place of feeling, and the curious incoherencies in the poet's speech which led the dwarf to make his rather cruel comment. At certain points of Canalis's discourse, when Monsieur Mignon, Dumay, Butscha, and Latournelle wondered at the man's utter want of logic, Modeste admired his suppleness, and said to herself, as she drew him with her through the labyrinth of fancy, "He loves me!" Butscha, in common with the other spectators of what we must call a stage scene, was struck with the radical defect of all egoists, which Canalis, like all men accustomed to perorate, allowed to be too plainly seen. Whether he understood beforehand what the person he was speaking to meant to say, whether he was not listening, or whether he had the faculty of listening when he was thinking of something else, it is certain that Melchior's face wore an absent-minded look in conversation, which disconcerted the ideas of others as much as it wounded their vanity.

Not to listen is not merely a want of politeness, but it is a mark of disrespect. Canalis carried this habit too far; for he often forgot to answer a speech which required an answer, and passed, without the ordinary transitions of courtesy, to the subject, whatever it was, that preoccupied him. Though such impertinence is accepted without protest from a man of marked distinction, it stirs a leaven of hatred and vengeance in many hearts; in those of equals it even goes so far as to destroy friendship. If by chance Melchior forced himself to listen, he fell into another fault; he merely lent his attention, and never gave it. Though this may not be so mortifying, it shows a kind of semi-concession which is almost as unsatisfactory to the hearer and leaves him dissatisfied. Nothing brings more profit in the commerce of society than the small change of attention. He that heareth let him hear, is not only a Gospel precept, but an excellent rule; follow it, and all will be forgiven, even vice. Canalis took a great deal of trouble in his anxiety to please Modeste; but though he was compliant enough with her, he fell back into his natural self with the others.

Modeste, pitiless for the ten martyrs she was making, begged Canalis to read some of his poems; she wanted, she said, a specimen of his gift for reading, of which she had heard so much. Canalis took the volume which she gave him, and cooed (for that is the proper word) a poem which is generally considered his finest—an imitation of Moore's "Loves of the Angels," entitled VITALIS, which Monsieur and Madame Dumay, Madame Latournelle, and Gobenheim welcomed with a few yawns.

"If you are a good whist-player, monsieur," said Gobenheim, flourishing five cards held like a fan, "I must say I have never met a man as accomplished as you."

The remark raised a laugh, for it was the translation of everybody's thought.

"I play it sufficiently well to live in the provinces for the rest of my days," replied Canalis. "That, I think, is enough, and more than enough literature and conversation for whist-players," he added, throwing the volume impatiently on a table.

This little incident serves to show what dangers environ a drawing-room hero when he steps, like Canalis, out of his sphere; he is like the favorite actor of a second-rate audience, whose talent comes to grief when he leaves his own boards and steps upon those of an upper-class theater.

XXI.

THE baron and the duke were partners, and Gobenheim and Latournelle played together. Modeste took a seat near the poet, to Ernest's deep disappointment; he watched the face of the capricious girl, and marked the progress of the fascination which Canalis exerted over

her. La Brière ad not the gift of seduction which Melchior possessed and which Nature frequently denies to true hearts, who are, as a rule, timid. This gift demands fearlessness and a vivacity of ways and means that might be called the trapèze of the mind ; a little mimicry goes with it; in fact there is always, morally speaking, something of the comedian in a poet. There is a vast difference between expressing sentiments we do not feel, though we may imagine all their variations, and feigning to feel them when bidding for success on the theater of private life. And yet, though the necessary hypocrisy of a man of the world may have gangrened a poet, he ends by carrying the faculties of his talent into the expression of any required sentiment, just as a great man doomed to solitude ends by infusing his heart into his mind.

"He is working for the millions," thought La Brière, sadly; "and he can imitate passion so well that Modeste will believe him."

Instead of endeavoring to appear more amiable and witty than his rival, Ernest, like the Duc d'Hérouville, was gloomy, anxious, and watchful ; but while the courtier studied the freaks of the young heiress, Ernest simply fell a prey to the pains of dark and concentrated jealousy. He had not yet been able to obtain a glance from his idol. After a while he left the room with Butscha.

"It is all over!" he said; "she is caught by him; I am more than disagreeable to her, and, moreover, she is right. Canalis is charming; there is wit even in his silence, passion in his eyes, and poetry in his rhodomontades."

"Is he an honest man?" asked Butscha.

"Oh, yes," replied La Brière. "He is loyal and chivalrous, and capable of getting rid, under Modeste's influence, of those affectations which Madame de Chaulieu has taught him."

"You are a fine fellow," said the hunchback; "but is he capable of loving—will he love her?"

"I don't know," answered La Brière. "Has she said anything about me?" he asked after a moment's silence.

"Yes," said Butscha, and he repeated Modeste's speech about disguises.

Poor Ernest flung himself upon a bench and held his head in his hands. He could not keep back his tears; he did not wish Butscha to see them; but the dwarf was the very man to guess his emotion.

"What troubles you?" he asked.

"She is right!" cried Ernest, suddenly lifting his head ; "I am a wretch."

And he related the deception into which Canalis had led him, carefully pointing out to Butscha, however, that he had wished to undeceive the young girl before she herself took off the mask, and apostrophizing his luckless destiny. Butscha sympathetically understood the love in the flavor and vigor of his simple language, and in his deep and genuine anxiety.

"But why don't you show yourself to Mademoiselle Modeste for what you are?" he said; "why do you let your rival do all his tricks for her benefit?"

"Have you never felt your throat tighten when you wished to speak to her?" cried La Brière; "is there never a strange feeling in the roots of your hair and on the surface of your skin when she looks at you—even if she is thinking of something else?"

"But you had sufficient judgment to look sorrowful when she as good as told her excellent father that he was a dolt."

"Monsieur, I love her too well not to have felt a knife in my heart when I heard her contradicting her own perfections."

"Canalis supported her."

"If she had more self-love than heart there would be nothing for a man to regret in losing her," answered La Brière.

At this moment Modeste, followed by Canalis, who had lost the rubber, came out with her father and Madame Dumay to breathe the fresh air of the starry night. While his daughter walked about with the poet, Charles Mignon left her and came up to La Brière.

"Your friend, monsieur, ought to have been a lawyer," he said, smiling and looking attentively at the young man.

"You must not judge a poet as severely as you would an ordinary man—as you would me, for example, Monsieur le Comte," said La Brière. "A poet has a mission. He is obliged by his nature to see the poetry of questions, just as he expresses that of things. When you think him inconsistent with himself, he is really faithful to his vocation. He is a painter copying with equal truth a Madonna and a courtesan. Molière is as true to nature in his old men as in his young ones, and Molière's judgment was assuredly a healthy one. These witty paradoxes might be dangerous for second-rate minds, but they have no real influence on the character of true, great men."

Charles Mignon pressed La Brière's hand.

"That adaptability, however, leads a man to excuse himself in his own eyes for actions that are diametrically opposed to each other; above all, in politics."

"Ah, mademoiselle," Canalis was at this moment saying, in a caressing voice, in reply to a malicious remark from Modeste, "do not think that a multiplicity of emotions can in any way lessen the strength of feelings. Poets, even more than other men, must needs love with constancy and faith. You must not be jealous of what is called the Muse. Happy is the wife of a man whose days are occupied. If you heard the complaints of women who have to endure the burden of an idle husband, either a man without duties, or one so rich as to have nothing to do, you would know that the highest happiness of a Parisian wife is freedom—the right to rule in her own home. Now, we writers and men of functions and occupations, we leave the scepter to our wives; it is impossible for us to descend to the tyranny of little minds: we have something better to do. If I ever marry—which I assure you is a catastrophe very remote at the present moment—I should wish my wife to enjoy complete moral freedom."

Canalis talked on, displaying the warmth of his fancy and all his graces, for Modeste's benefit, as he spoke of love, marriage, and the adoration of women, until Monsieur Mignon, who had rejoined them, seized the opportunity of a slight pause to take his daughter's arm and lead her up to Ernest de la Brière, whom he had been advising to seek an open explanation with her.

"Mademoiselle," said Ernest, in a voice that was scarcely his own, "it is impossible for me to remain any longer under the weight of your displeasure. I do not defend myself; I do not seek to justify my conduct; I desire only to make you see that *before* reading your most flattering letter, addressed to the individual and no longer to the poet—the last which you sent to me—I wished, and I told you in my note written at Havre, that I wished to correct the error under which you were acting. All the feelings that I have had the happiness of expressing to you are sincere. A hope dawned on me in Paris when your father called himself poor—but now, if all is lost, if nothing is left for me but endless regrets, why should I stay here where all is torture? Let me carry away with me one smile, to live forever in my heart."

"Monsieur," answered Modeste, who appeared cold and absent-minded, "I am not the mistress of this house; but I certainly should deeply regret to retain any one where he finds neither pleasure nor happiness."

She left La Brière and took Madame Dumay's arm to re-enter the house. A few moments later all the actors in this domestic scene, once more assembled in the salon, were surprised to see Modeste sitting beside the Duc d'Hérouville and coquetting with him like an accomplished woman of the world. She watched his play, gave him advice when he asked for it, and found occasion to say flattering things by ranking the merits of noble birth with those of genius and beauty. Canalis thought he knew the reason of this change; he had tried to pique Modeste by calling marriage a catastrophe, and showing that he was aloof from it; but like others who play with fire, he had burned his fingers. Modeste's pride and her present disdain frightened him, and he endeavored to recover his ground, ex-

hibiting a jealousy which was all the more visible because it was artificial. Modeste, implacable as the angels, tasted the sweets of power, and, naturally enough, abused it. The Duc d'Hérouville had never known such a happy evening; a woman smiled on him! At eleven o'clock, an unheard-of hour at the Chalet, the three suitors took their leave—the duke thinking Modeste charming, Canalis believing her excessively coquettish, and La Brière heart-broken by her cruelty.

For eight days the heiress continued to be to her three lovers very much what she had been during that evening; so that the poet appeared to carry the day against his rivals, in spite of freaks and caprices which from time to time gave the Duc d'Hérouville a little hope. The disrespect she showed to her father, and the great liberties she took with him; her impatience with her blind mother, to whom she seemed to grudge the little services which had once been the delight of her filial piety—seemed the result of a capricious nature and a heedless gayety indulged from childhood. When Modeste went too far, she turned round and openly took herself to task, ascribing her impertinence and levity to a spirit of independence. She acknowledged to the duke and Canalis her distaste for obedience, and professed to regard it as an obstacle to her marriage; thus questioning into the nature of her suitors, after the manner of those who dig into the earth in search of metals, coal, tufa, or water.

"I shall never," she said, the evening before the day on which the family were to move into the villa, "find a husband who will put up with my caprices as my father does; his kindness never flags. And no one will ever be as indulgent to me as my precious mother."

"They know that you love them, mademoiselle," said La Brière.

"You may be very sure, mademoiselle, that your husband will know the full value of his treasure," added the duke.

"You have more than enough spirit and resolution to discipline a husband," cried Canalis, laughing.

Modeste smiled as Henri IV. must have smiled after drawing out the characters of his three principal ministers, for the benefit of a foreign embassador, by means of three answers to an insidious question.

On the day of the dinner, Modeste, drawn on by the preference she bestowed on Canalis, walked alone with him up and down the graveled space which lay between the house and the lawn. From the gestures of the poet, and the air and manner of the young heiress, it was easy to see that she was listening favorably to him. The two Demoiselles d'Hérouville hastened to interrupt the scandalous tete-à-tete; and with the natural cleverness of women under such circumstances, they turned the conversation on the court, and the distinction of an appointment under the crown, explaining the difference that existed between appointments in the household of the king and those of the crown. They tried to intoxicate Modeste's mind by appealing to her pride, and describing one of the highest stations to which a woman could aspire.

"To have a duke for a son," said the elder lady, "is an actual advantage. The title is a fortune that we secure to our children without the possibility of loss."

"How is it, then," said Canalis, displeased at his tete-à-tete being thus broken in upon, "that Monsieur le Duc has had so little success in a matter where his title would seem to be of special service to him?"

The two ladies cast a look at Canalis as full of venom as the tooth of a snake, and they were so disconcerted by Modeste's amused smile that they were actually unable to reply.

"Monsieur le Duc has never blamed you," she said to Canalis, "for the humility with which you bear your fame; why should you attack him for his modesty?"

"Besides, we have never yet met a woman worthy of my nephew's rank," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville. "Some had only the wealth of the position; others, without fortune, had the wit and birth. I must admit that we have done

well to wait till God granted us an opportunity to meet one in whom we find the noble blood, the mind, and fortune of a Duchesse d'Hérouville."

"My dear Modeste," said Hélène d'Hérouville, leading her new friend apart, "there are a thousand Barons de Canalis in the kingdom, just as there are a hundred poets in Paris, who are worth as much as he; he is so little of a great man that even I, a poor girl forced to take the veil for want of a *dot*, I would not take him. You don't know what a young man is who has been paraded for ten years by a Duchesse de Chaulieu. No one but an old woman of sixty could put up with the little ailments of which, they say, the great poet is always complaining—a habit which, in Louis XIV., became a perfectly insupportable annoyance. It is true the duchess does not suffer from it as much as a wife, who would have him always about her."

Then, practicing a well-known maneuver to her sex, Hélène d'Hérouville repeated in a low voice all the calumnies which women jealous of the Duchesse de Chaulieu were in the habit of spreading about the poet. This little incident, common as it is in the intercourse of women, will serve to show how hot was the chase after Modeste's wealth.

Ten days saw a great change in the opinions at the Chalet as to the three suitors for Mademoiselle de la Bastie's hand. This change, which was much to the disadvantage of Canalis, came about through considerations of a nature which ought to make the holders of any kind of fame pause, and reflect. No one can deny, if we remember the passion with which people seek for autographs, that public curiosity is greatly excited by celebrity. Evidently most provincials never form an exact idea in their own minds of the way in which illustrious Parisians put on their cravats, walk on the boulevard, stand gaping at nothing, or eat a cutlet; because, no sooner do they perceive a man clothed in the sunbeams of fashion or resplendent with some dignity that is more or less fugitive (though always envied) than they cry out, "Look at that!" "How queer!" and other depreciatory exclamations. In a word, the mysterious charm that attaches to every kind of fame, even that which is most justly due, never lasts. It is, especially with superficial people who are envious or sarcastic, a sensation which passes off with the rapidity of lightning, and never returns. It would seem as though glory, like the sun, hot and luminous at a distance, were cold as the summit of an alp when it is approached. Perhaps man is only really great to his peers; perhaps the defects inherent in his constitution disappear sooner to the eyes of his equals than to those of vulgar admirers. A poet, if he would please in ordinary life, must put on the lying graces of those who are able to make their insignificance forgotten by charming manners and complaisant speeches. The poet of the Faubourg Saint Germain, who did not choose to bow before this social dictum, was made before long to feel that an insulting provincial indifference had succeeded to the dazed fascination of the earlier evenings. The prodigality of his wit and wisdom had produced upon these worthy souls somewhat the effect which a shopful of glassware produces on the eye; in other words, the fire and brilliancy of Canalis's eloquence soon wearied people who, to use their own words, "cared more for the solid."

Forced after a while to behave like an ordinary man, the poet found numerous unexpected stumbling-blocks on ground where La Brière had already won the suffrage of the worthy people who at first had thought him sulky. They felt the need of compensating themselves for Canalis's reputation by preferring his friend. The best of men are made thus. The simple and straightforward young fellow jarred no one's self-love; coming to know him better they discovered his heart, his modesty, his silent and sure discretion, and his excellent bearing. The Duc d'Hérouville considered him, as a political element, far above Canalis. The poet, ill-balanced, ambitious, and restless as Tasso, loved luxury and grandeur, and ran into debt; while the young lawyer, whose character was equable and

well-balanced, lived soberly, was useful without proclaiming it, awaited rewards without begging for them, and saved his money.

Canalis had moreover laid himself open in a special way to the bourgeois eyes that were watching him. For two or three days he had shown signs of impatience; he had given way to depression, to states of melancholy without apparent reason, to those capricious changes of temper which are the natural results of the nervous temperament of poets. These originalities (the provincial term) came from the uneasiness caused him by his conduct toward the Duchesse de Chaulieu, which he was daily less able to explain. He knew he ought to write to her, but could not resolve on doing so. All these fluctuations were carefully remarked and commented on by the gentle American, and the excellent Madame Latournelle. Canalis felt the effect of these discussions without being able to explain them. The attention paid to him was not the same, the faces surrounding him no longer wore the entranced look of the earlier days; while at the same time Ernest was evidently gaining ground.

For the last two days the poet had endeavored to fascinate Modeste only, and he took advantage of every moment when he found himself alone with her, to weave the web of passionate language around his love. Modeste's blush, as she listened to him on the occasion we have just mentioned, showed the Demoiselles d'Hérouville the pleasure with which she was listening to sweet conceits sweetly said; and they, uneasy at the poet's progress, had immediate recourse to the *ultima ratio* of women in such cases, namely, those calumnies which seldom miss their object. Accordingly, when the party met at the dinner-table the poet saw a cloud on the brow of his idol; he knew that Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's malignity allowed him to lose no time, and he resolved to offer himself as a husband at the first moment when he could find himself alone with Modeste.

Overhearing a few acid though polite remarks exchanged between the poet and the two noble ladies, Gobenheim nudged Butscha with his elbow, and said in an undertone, motioning toward the poet and the grand equerry—

"They'll demolish one another!"

"Canalis has genius enough to demolish himself all alone," answered the dwarf.

XXII.

During the dinner, which was magnificent and admirably well served, the duke obtained a signal advantage over Canalis. Modeste, who on the previous night had received her habit and other equestrian equipments, spoke of taking rides about the country. A turn of the conversation led her to express the wish to see a hunt with hounds, a pleasure she had never yet enjoyed. The duke at once proposed to arrange a hunt in one of the crown forests, which lay a few leagues from Havre. Thanks to his intimacy with the Prince de Cadignan, Master of the Hunt, he saw his chance of displaying an almost regal pomp before Modeste's eyes, and alluring her with a glimpse of court fascinations, to which she could be introduced by marriage. Glances were exchanged between the duke and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, which plainly said, "The heiress is ours!" and the poet, who detected them, and who had nothing but his personal splendors to depend on, determined to hasten and obtain some pledge of affection at once. Modeste, on the other hand, half-frightened at being thus pushed beyond her intentions by the d'Hérouvilles, walked rather markedly apart with Melchior, when the company adjourned to the park after dinner. With the pardonable curiosity of a young girl, she allowed him to suspect the calumnies which Hélène had poured into her ears; but on an exclamation from Canalis she begged him to keep silence about them, and he promised to do so.

"These stabs of the tongue," he said, "are considered fair in the great world. They shock your upright nature; but as for me, I laugh at them; I am even

pleased. These ladies must feel that the duke's interests are in great peril, when they have recourse to such warfare."

Making the most of the advantage Modeste had thus given him, Canalis brought to his defense such warmth, such eagerness, and a passion so exquisitely expressed, as he thanked her for a confidence in which he could venture to see the dawn of love, that she found herself suddenly as much compromised with the poet as she had feared to be with the grand equerry. Canalis, feeling the necessity of boldness, declared himself plainly. He uttered vows and protestations in which his poetry shone like a moon, invoked for the occasion, and illuminating his allusions to the beauty of his mistress and charms of her evening dress. This counterfeit enthusiasm, in which the night, the foliage, the heavens and the earth, and Nature herself played a part, carried the eager lover beyond all bounds; for he dwelt on his disinterestedness, and revamped, in his own charming style, Diderot's famous apostrophe to "Sophie and fifteen hundred francs!" and the well-worn "love in a cottage" of every lover who knows perfectly well the length of the father-in-law's purse.

"Monsieur," said Modeste, after listening with delight to the melody of this concerto, so well executed upon "*a well-known theme*," "the freedom granted to me by my parents has permitted me to listen to you; but it is to them that you must address yourself."

"But," exclaimed Canalis, "tell me that if I obtain their consent, you will ask nothing better than to obey them."

"I know beforehand," she replied, "that my father has certain fancies which may wound the just pride of an old family like yours. He wishes to have his own title and name borne by his grandsons."

"Ah! dear Modeste, what sacrifices would I not make to commit my life to the guardian care of an angel like you."

"You will permit me not to decide in a moment the fate of my whole life," she said, turning to rejoin the Demoiselles d'Hérouville.

Those noble ladies were just then engaged in flattering the vanity of little Latournelle, intending to win him over to their interests. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, to whom we shall in future confine the family name, to distinguish her from her niece Hélène, was giving the notary to understand that the post of judge of the Supreme Court in Havre, which Charles X. would bestow as she desired, was an office worthy of his legal talent and his well-known probity. Butscha, meanwhile, who had been walking about with La Brière, was greatly alarmed at the progress Canalis was evidently making, and he waylaid Modeste at the lower step of the portico when the whole party returned to the house to endure the torments of their inevitable whist.

"Mademoiselle," he said, in a low voice, "I hope that you do not yet call him Melchior."

"I'm very near it, my Black Dwarf," she said, with a smile that might have made an angel fall.

"Good God!" exclaimed Butscha, letting fall his hands, which struck the marble steps.

"Well! and isn't he worth more than that spiteful and gloomy secretary in whom you take such an interest?" she retorted, assuming, at the mere thought of Ernest, the haughty manner whose secret belongs exclusively to young girls—as if their virginity lent them wings to fly to heaven. "Pray, would your little La Brière accept me without a fortune?" she said, after a pause.

"Ask your father," replied Butscha, walking a few steps from the house, to get Modeste at a safe distance from the windows. "Listen to me, mademoiselle. You know that he who speaks to you is ready to give not only his life but his honor for you, at any moment, and at all times. Therefore you may believe in him; you can confide to him that which you may not, perhaps, be willing to say to your father. Tell me, has that sublime Canalis been making you the disinterested offer that you now fling as a reproach at poor Ernest?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe it?"

"That question, my manikin," she replied, giving him one of the ten or a dozen nicknames she had invented for him, "strikes me as undervaluing the strength of my self-love."

"Ah, you are laughing, my dear Mademoiselle Modeste; then there's no danger: I hope you are only making a fool of him."

"Pray what would you think of me, Monsieur Butscha, if I allowed myself to make fun of those who do me the honor to wish to marry me? You ought to know, Master Jean, that even if a girl affects to scorn the most despicable attentions, she is always flattered by them."

"Then I flatter you?" said the young man, looking up at her with a face that was illuminated like a city for a festival.

"You?" she said; "you give me the most precious of all friendships—a feeling as disinterested as that of a mother for her child. Compare yourself to no one; for even my father is obliged to be devoted to me." She paused. "I cannot say that I love you, in the sense which men give to that word, but what I do give you is eternal and can know no change."

"Then," said Butscha, stooping to pick up a pebble that he might kiss the hem of her garment, "suffer me to watch over you as a dragon guards a treasure. The poet was covering you just now with the lace-work of his precious phrases, the tinsel of his promises; he chanted his love on the best strings of his lyre, did he not? If, as soon as this noble lover finds out how small your fortune is, he makes a sudden change in his behavior, and is cold and embarrassed, will you still marry him? shall you still esteem him?"

"He would be another Francisque Althor," she said, with a gesture of bitter disgust.

"Let me have the pleasure of producing that change of scene," said Butscha. "Not only shall it be sudden, but I believe I can afterward change it back and make your poet as loving as before—nay, it is possible to make him blow alternately hot and cold upon your heart, just as gracefully as he has talked on both sides of an argument in one evening without ever finding it out."

"If you are right," she said, "who can be trusted?"

"One who truly loves you."

"The little duke?"

Butscha looked at Modeste. The pair walked some distance in silence; the girl was impenetrable and not an eyelash quivered.

"Mademoiselle, permit me to be the exponent of the thoughts that are lying at the bottom of your heart like sea-mosses under the waves, and which you do not choose to gather up."

"Eh!" said Modeste, "so my intimate friend and counselor thinks himself a mirror, does he?"

"No, an echo," he answered, with a gesture of sublime humility. "The duke loves you, but he loves you too much. If I, a dwarf, have understood the infinite delicacy of your heart, it would be repugnant to you to be worshiped like a saint in her shrine. You are eminently a woman; you want neither a man perpetually at your feet of whom you are eternally sure, nor a selfish egoist like Canalis, who will always prefer himself to you. Why? ah, that I don't know. But I will make myself a woman, an old woman, to find out the meaning of the plan which I have read in your eyes, and which perhaps is in the heart of every girl. Nevertheless, in your great soul you feel the need of worshiping. When a man is at your knees, you cannot put yourself at his. You cannot go far in that way, as Voltaire might say. The little duke has too many genuflections in his moral being and the poet has too few—indeed, I might say, none at all. I have guessed the mischief concealed in your smiles when you talk to the grand equerry, and when he talks to you and you answer him. You would never be unhappy with the duke, and everybody will approve your choice, if you do choose him; but you will never love him. The ice of egotism, and the burning heat of ecstasy both produce indifference in the heart of every woman. No such perpetual worship will give you

the infinite delights which you are dreaming of in marriage—in some marriage where obedience will be your pride, where noble little sacrifices can be made and hidden, where the heart is full of anxieties without a cause, and successes are awaited with eager hope, where each new chance for magnanimity is hailed with joy, where souls are comprehended to their inmost recesses, and where the woman protects with her love the man who protects her."

"You are a sorcerer!" exclaimed Modeste.

"Neither will you find that sweet equality of sentiments, that continual sharing of each other's life, that certainty of pleasing which makes marriage tolerable, if you take Canalis—a man who thinks of himself only, whose 'I' is the one string to his lute, whose mind is so fixed on himself that he has hitherto taken no notice of your father or the duke—a man of second-rate ambitions, to whom your dignity and your devotion will matter nothing, who will make you a mere appendage to his household, and who already insults you by his indifference to your behavior; yes, if you permitted yourself to go so far as to box your mother's ears, Canalis would shut his eyes to it, and deny your crime even to himself, because he thirsts for your money. And so, mademoiselle, when I spoke of the man who truly loves you I was not thinking of the great poet who is nothing but a little comedian, nor of the duke, who might be a good marriage for you, but never a husband—"

"Butscha, my heart is a blank page on which you are yourself writing all that you read there," cried Modeste, interrupting him. "You are carried away by your provincial hatred for everything that obliges you to look higher than your own head. You can't forgive a poet for being a statesman, for possessing the gift of speech, for having a noble future before him—and you calumniate his intentions."

"His!—mademoiselle, he will turn his back upon you with the baseness of an Althor."

"Make him play that pretty little comedy, and—"

"That I will! he shall play it through and through within three days—on Wednesday—recollect, Wednesday! Until then, mademoiselle, amuse yourself by listening to the little tunes of the lyre, so that the discords and the false notes may come out all the more distinctly."

Modeste ran gayly back to the salon, where La Brière, who had been seated by a window, where he had doubtless been watching his idol, rose to his feet as if a groom of the chambers had suddenly announced, "The Queen." It was a movement of spontaneous respect, full of that living eloquence that lies in gesture even more than in speech. Spoken love cannot compare with acts of love; and every young girl of twenty has the wisdom of fifty in applying the axiom. In that lies the great secret of attraction. Instead of looking Modeste in the face, as Canalis, who paid her public homage, would have done, the neglected lover followed her with a furtive look between his eyelids, humble as Butscha, and almost timid. The young heiress observed it, as she took her place by Canalis, in whose game she proceeded to interest herself. During a conversation which ensued, La Brière heard Modeste say to her father that she should ride out for the first time on the following Wednesday; and she also reminded him that she had no whip in keeping with her new equipments. The young man flung a lightning glance at the dwarf, and a few minutes later the two were pacing the terrace.

"It is nine o'clock," cried Ernest. "I shall start for Paris at full gallop; I can get there to-morrow morning by ten. My dear Butscha, from you she will accept anything, for she is attached to you; let me give her a riding-whip in your name. If you will do me this immense kindness you shall have not only my frindship but my devotion."

"Ah, you are very fortunate," said Butscha, ruefully; "you have money."

"Tell Canalis not to expect me, and let him invent some pretext to account for my absence."

An hour later Ernest had ridden out of Havre. He reached Paris in twelve hours, where his first act was to secure a place in the mail-coach for Havre on the following evening. Then he went to three of the chief jewelers in Paris and compared all the whip-handles that they could offer; he was in search of some artistic treasure that was regally superb. He found one at last, made by Stidmann for a Russian, who was unable to pay for it when finished—a fox-head in gold, with a ruby of exorbitant value; all his savings went into the purchase, the cost of which was seven thousand francs. Ernest gave a drawing of the arms of La Bastie, and allowed the shop-people twenty hours to engrave them in place of those which were already there. This handle, a masterpiece of delicate workmanship, was fitted to an india-rubber whip and put into a morocco case lined with velvet, on which two M.'s interlaced were stamped in gold.

La Brière got back to Havre by the mail-coach Wednesday morning in time to breakfast with Canalis. The poet had concealed his secretary's absence by declaring that he was busy with some work sent from Paris. Butscha, who met La Brière at the coach-door, took the box containing the precious work of art to Francoise Cochet, with instructions to place it on Modeste's dressing-table.

"Of course you will accompany Mademoiselle Modeste on her ride to-day?" said Butscha, when he went to Canalis's house to let La Brière know by a wink that the whip had gone to its destination.

"I?" answered Ernest; "no, I am going to bed."

"Bah!" exclaimed Canalis, looking at him. "I don't know what to make of you any more."

Breakfast was then served, and the poet naturally invited their visitor to stay and take it. Butscha complied, having seen in the expression of the valet's face the success of a trick in which we shall see the first fruits of his promise to Modeste.

"Monsieur is very right to detain Monsieur Latournelle's clerk," whispered Germain in his master's ear.

Canalis and Germain went into the salon at a sign that passed between them.

"I went out this morning to see the men fish, monsieur," said the valet—"an excursion proposed to me by the captain of a smack, whose acquaintance I have made."

Germain did not acknowledge that he had the bad taste to play billiards in a café—a fact of which Butscha had taken advantage to surround him with friends of his own and manage him as he pleased.

"Well?" said Canalis, "to the point—quick!"

"Monsieur le Baron, I heard a conversation about Monsieur Mignon, which I encouraged as far as I could; for no one, of course, knew that I belong to you. Ah! monsieur, judging by the talk of the quays, you are running your head into a noose. The fortune of Mademoiselle de la Bastie is, like her name, modest. The vessel on which the father returned does not belong to him, but to rich China merchants to whom he renders an account. They even say things that are not at all flattering to Monsieur Mignon's honor. Having heard that you and Monsieur le Duc were rivals for Mademoiselle de la Bastie's hand, I have taken the liberty to warn you; for of the two, it would be better that his lordship should gobble her. As I came home I walked round the quays, and into that theater-hall where the merchants meet; I slipped boldly in and out among them. Seeing a well-dressed stranger, those worthy fellows began to talk to me of Havre, and I got them, little by little, to speak of Colonel Mignon. What they said only confirms the stories the fishermen told me; and I feel that I should fail in my duty if I keep silence. That is why I did not get home in time to dress monsieur this morning."

"What am I to do?" cried Canalis, who remembered his proposals to Modeste the night before, and did not see how he could get out of them.

"Monsieur knows my attachment to him," said Germain, perceiving that the poet was thrown quite off his balance; "he will not be surprised if I give him

a word of advice. There is that clerk; try to get the truth out of him. Perhaps he'll unbutton after a bottle or two of champagne, or at any rate a third. It would be strange indeed if monsieur, who will one day be an embassador, as Philoxène has heard Madame la Duchesse say time and time again, could not get to the bottom of a provincial clerk's knowledge."

XXIII.

At this instant Butscha, the unknown author of the fishing party, was requesting the secretary to say nothing about his trip to Paris, and not to interfere in any way with what he, Butscha, might do. The dwarf had already made use of an unfavorable feeling lately roused in Havre against Monsieur Mignon. The latter had completely ignored those of his former friends who during his absence had neglected his wife and children. When they had learned that he was about to give a great dinner, they had expected invitations, but when they found that Gobenheim, the Latournelles, the duke and the two Parisians were the only guests, a great clamor arose concerning the merchant's pride and affectation, which were attributed to scorn, and Havre took its revenge by questioning the amount of the fortune which had suddenly come to the Mignons. The persons who were most bitter against him even declared calumniously that he had made over a large amount of property to Dumay to save it from the just demands of his associates in China. Butscha took advantage of this state of feeling. He asked the fishermen, who owed him many a good turn, to keep the secret and lend him their tongues. They served him well. The captain of the fishing-smack told Germain that one of his cousins, a sailor, had just returned from Marseilles, where he had been paid off from the brig in which Monsieur Mignon returned to France. The brig had been sold to the account of some other person than Monsieur Mignon, and the cargo was only worth three or four hundred thousand francs at the utmost.

"Germain," said Canalis, as the valet was leaving the room, "serve champagne and claret. A member of the legal fraternity of Havre must carry away with him proper ideas of a poet's hospitality. Besides, he has got a wit that is equal to Figaro's," added Canalis, laying his hand on the dwarf's shoulder, "and we must make it foam and sparkle with champagne; you and I, Ernest, will not spare the bottle either. Faith, it is over two years since I've been drunk," he added, looking at La Brière.

"Not drunk with wine, you mean," said Butscha, looking keenly at him, "yes, I can believe that. You get drunk every day on yourself, you drink so many praises. Ha! you are handsome, you are a poet, you are famous in your lifetime, you have the gift of an eloquence that is equal to your genius, and you please all women — even my master's wife. Admired by the finest woman that I ever saw in my life, you can, if you choose, marry Mademoiselle de la Bastie. Goodness! the mere inventory of your present advantages, not to speak of the future (a noble title, peerage, embassy!), is enough to make me drunk already—like the men who bottle other men's wine."

"All such social distinctions," said Canalis, "are of little use without the one thing that gives them value — wealth. Here we can talk as men with men; fine sentiments only do in verse."

"That depends on circumstances," said the dwarf, with a knowing gesture.

"Ah! you writer of conveyances," said the poet, smiling at the interruption, "you know as well as I do that *cottage* rhymes with *pottage* — and who would like to live on that for the rest of his days?"

At table Butscha played the part of Trigaudin, in the *Maison en loterie*, in a way that alarmed Ernest, who did not know the waggery of a lawyer's office, which is quite equal to that of an atelier. Butscha poured forth the scandalous gossip of Havre, the private history of fortunes and boudoirs, and the crimes com-

mitted code in hand, which are called in Normandy, "getting out of a thing as best you can." He spared no one; and his liveliness increased with the torrents of wine which poured down his throat like rain through a gutter.

"Do you know, La Brière," said Canalis, filling Butscha's glass, "that this fellow would make a capital secretary to the embassy?"

"And oust his chief!" cried the dwarf, flinging a look at Canalis whose insolence was lost in the gurgling of carbonic acid gas. "I've little enough gratitude and quite enough scheming to get astride of your shoulders. Ha, ha, a poet carrying a hunchback! that's been seen, often seen —on book-shelves. Come, you look at me as if I were swallowing swords. My dear great genius, you're a superior man; you know that gratitude is the word of fools; it is in the dictionary, but it isn't in the human heart; pledges are worth nothing, except on a certain mount that is neither Pindus nor Parnassus. You think I owe a great deal to my master's wife, who brought me up. Bless you, the whole town has paid her for that in praises, respect, and admiration—the very best of coin. I don't recognize any service that has an income of self-love. Men make a commerce of their services, and gratitude goes down on the debit side—that's all. As to schemes, they are my divinity. What?" he exclaimed, at a gesture of Canalis, "don't you admire the faculty which enables a wily man to get the better of a man of genius? It takes the closest observation of his vices and his weaknesses, and the wit to seize the happy moment. Ask diplomacy if its greatest triumphs are not those of craft over force? If I were your secretary, Monsieur le Baron, you'd soon be prime minister, because it would be my interest to have you so. Do you want a specimen of my talents in that line? Well then, listen; you love Mademoiselle Modeste distractedly, and you've good reason to do so. The girl has my fullest esteem; she is a true Parisian. Sometimes we get a few real Parisians born down here in the provinces. Well, Modeste is just the woman to help a man's career. She's got *that* in her," he cried, with a turn of his wrist in the air. "But you've a dangerous competitor in the duke; what will you give me to get him out of Havre within three days?"

"Finish this bottle," said the poet, refilling Butscha's glass.

"You'll make me drunk," said the dwarf, tossing off his ninth glass of champagne. "Have you a bed where I could sleep it off? My master is as sober as the camel that he is, and Madame Latournelle too. They would be unkind enough, both of them, to scold me; and they'd have the rights of it too—there are those deeds I ought to be drawing!—" Then, suddenly returning to his previous ideas, after the fashion of a drunken man, he exclaimed, "and I've such a memory; it is equal to my gratitude."

"Butscha!" cried the poet, "you said just now you had no gratitude; you contradict yourself."

"Not at all," he replied. "To forget a thing means almost always recollecting it. Come, come, do you want me to get rid of the duke? I'm cut out for a secretary."

"How could you manage it?" said Canalis, delighted to find the conversation taking this turn of its own accord.

"That's none of your business," said the dwarf, with a portentous hiccough.

Butscha's head rolled between his shoulders, and his eyes turned from Germain to La Brière, and from La Brière to Canalis, after the manner of men who, knowing they are tipsy, wish to see what other men are thinking of them; for in the shipwreck of drunkenness it is noticeable that self-love is the last thing that goes to the bottom.

"Ha! my great poet, you're a pretty good trickster yourself; but you are not deep enough. What do you mean by taking me for one of your own readers—you, who sent your friend to Paris, full gallop, to inquire into the property of the Mignon family? Ha, ha! I hoax, thou hoaxest, we hoax—Good! But do me the honor to believe that I'm deep enough to keep the secrets of my own business. As the head-

clerk of a notary, my heart is a locked box, padlocked! My mouth never opens to let out anything about a client. I know all, and I know nothing. Besides, my passion is well known. I love Modeste; she is my pupil, and she must make a good marriage. I'll fool the duke, if need be; and you shall marry—"

"Germain, coffee and liqueurs," said Canalis.

"Liqueurs!" repeated Butscha with a wave of his hand, as if to repel seduction. "Ah, those poor deeds! one of 'em was a marriage contract; and that second clerk of mine is as stupid as—as—an epithalamium, and he's capable of digging his penknife right through the bride's paraphernalia; he thinks he's a handsome man because he's five feet six—idiot!"

"Here is some crême de thé, a liqueur of the West Indies," said Canalis. "You, whom Mademoiselle Modeste consults—"

"Yes, she consults me."

"Well, do you think she loves me?" asked the poet.

"Loves you? yes, more than she loves the duke," answered the dwarf, rousing himself from a stupor which was admirably played. "She loves you for your disinterestedness. She told me that for you she was capable of any sacrifice; to give up dress and spend as little as possible on herself, and devote her life to showing you that in marrying her you hadn't done so [hiccough] bad a thing for yourself. She's as right as a trivet—yes, and well informed. She knows everything, that girl."

"And she has three hundred thousand francs?"

"There may be quite as much as that," cried the dwarf, enthusiastically. "Papa Mignon — mignon by name, mignon by nature, and that's why I respect him—well, he would rob himself of everything to marry his daughter. Your Restoration [hiccough] has taught him how to live on half-pay; he'd be quite content to live with Dumay on next to nothing, in Havre, if he could rake and scrape enough together to give the little one three hundred thousand francs. But don't let's forget that Dumay is going to leave all his money to Modeste. Dumay, you know, is a Breton, and a Breton always keeps his word; and his fortune is equal to the colonel's. But I don't approve of Monsieur Mignon's taking back that villa, and, as they often ask my advice, I told them so. 'You sink too much in it,' I said; 'if Vilquin does not buy it back there's two hundred thousand francs which won't bring you in a penny; it only leaves you a hundred thousand to get along with, and it isn't enough.' The colonel and Dumay are consulting about it now. But nevertheless, between you and me, Modeste is sure to be rich. I hear talk on the quays against it; but that's all nonsense; people are jealous. Why, there's no such *dot* in Havre," cried Butscha, beginning to count on his fingers. "Two to three hundred thousand in ready money," bending back the thumb of his left hand with the forefinger of his right, "that's one item; the reversion of the villa Mignon, that's another; *tertio*, Dumay's property!" doubling down his middle finger. "Ha! little Modeste may count up her six hundred thousand francs as soon as the two old soldiers have got their marching orders for eternity."

This coarse and candid statement, intermingled with a variety of liquors, sobered Canalis as much as it appeared to befuddle Butscha. To the latter, a young provincial, such a fortune must of course seem colossal. He let his head fall into the palm of his right hand, and, putting his hand majestically on the table, blinked his eyes and continued talking to himself—

"In twenty years, thanks to that Code, which pillages fortunes under what they call 'Successions,' an heiress worth a million will be as rare as generosity in a money-lender. Suppose Modeste does want to spend all the interest of her own money — well, she is so pretty, so sweet and pretty; why she's—you poets are always after metaphors — she's a weasel as tricky as a monkey."

"How came you to tell me she had six millions?" said Canalis to La Brière, in a low voice.

"My friend," said Ernest, "I do assure you that I was bound to silence by

an oath; perhaps, even now I ought not to say as much as that."

"Bound! to whom?"

"To Monsieur Mignon."

"Ernest! you who know how essential fortune is to me—"

Butscha snored.

"—who know my situation, and all that I shall lose in the Duchesse de Chaulieu, by marrying, *you* coldly let me plunge into such a thing as this!" exclaimed Canalis, turing pale. "It was a question of friendship; and ours was a compact entered into long before you ever saw that crafty Mignon."

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "I love Modeste too well to—"

"Fool! then take her," cried the poet, "and break your oath."

"Will you promise me on your word of honor to forget what I now tell you, and to behave to me as though this confidence had never been made, whatever happens?"

"I'll swear that, by my mother's memory."

"Well then," said La Brière, "Monsieur Mignon told me in Paris that he was very far from having the colossal fortune which the Mongenods told me about and which I mentioned to you. The colonel intends to give two hundred thousand francs to his daughter. And now, Melchior, I ask you, was the father really distrustful of us, as you thought; or was he sincere? It is not for me to answer those questions. If Modeste, without a fortune, deigns to choose me, she will still be my wife."

"A blue-stocking! educated till she is a terror! a girl who has read everything, who knows everything—in theory," cried Canalis, hastily, noticing La Brière's gesture, "a spoiled child, brought up in luxury in her childhood, and who has been without it for five years. Ah! my poor friend, take care what you are about."

"Ode and Code," said Butscha, waking up, "you do the ode and I the code; there's only a C's difference between us. Well, now, code comes from *coda*, a tail—mark that word! See here! a bit of good advice is worth your wine and your cream of tea. Father Mignon—he's cream, too; the cream of honest men—he is going with his daughter on this riding party: do you go up frankly and talk *dot* to him. He'll answer plainly, and you'll get at the truth just as surely as I'm drunk, and you're a great poet—but no matter for that; we are to leave Havre together, that's settled, isn't it? I'm to be your secretary in place of that little fellow who sits there grinning at me and thinking I'm drunk. Come, let's go, and leave him to marry the girl."

Canalis rose to leave the room to dress for the excursion.

"Hush, not a word—he is going to commit suicide," whispered Butscha, sober as a judge, to La Brière, as he made at Canalis's back a gesture familiar to the gamins of Paris. "Adieu, my chief!" he shouted, in stentorian tones, "will you allow me to take a snooze in that kiosk down in the garden?"

"Make yourself at home," answered the poet.

Butscha, pursued by the laughter of the three servants of the establishment, gained the kiosk by walking over the flower-beds and round the vases with the perverse grace of an insect describing its interminable zig-zags as it tries to get out of a closed window. When he had clambered into the kiosk, and the servants had retired, he sat down on a wooden bench and wallowed in the delights of his triumph. He had completely fooled a great man; he had not only torn off his mask, but he had made him untie the strings himself; and he laughed like an author over his own play—with a true sense of the immense value of this *vis comica.*

"Men are tops!" he cried, "you've only to find the twine to wind 'em with. But I'm like my fellows," he added, presently. "I should faint away if any one came and said to me, 'Mademoiselle Modeste has been thrown from her horse, and has broken her leg.'"

XXIV.

A FEW moments later, Modeste, charmingly equipped in a bottle-green cassimere habit, a small hat with a green veil, buckskin gloves, and velvet boots, and mounted on an elegantly caparisoned little horse, was exhibiting to her father and the Duc d'Hérouville the beautiful present she had just received; she was evidently delighted with one of those attentions that particularly flatter women.

"Did it come from you, Monsieur le Duc?" she said, holding the sparkling handle toward him. "There was a card with it, saying, 'Guess, if you can,' and some asterisks. Francoise and Dumay credit Butscha with this charming surprise; but my dear Butscha is not rich enough to buy such rubies. And as for papa (to whom I said, as I remember, on Sunday evening, that I had no whip), he sent to Rouen for this one"—pointing to a whip in her father's hand, with a top sown with turquoises, a fashion then in vogue which has since become common.

"I would give ten years of my old age, mademoiselle, to have the right to offer you that beautiful jewel," said the duke, courteously.

"Ah, here comes the audacious giver!" cried Modeste, as Canalis rode up. "It is only a poet who knows where to find such choice things. Monsieur," she said to Melchior, "my father will scold you, and say that you justify those who accuse you of extravagance."

"Oh!" exclaimed Canalis, with apparent simplicity, "so that is why La Brière rode at full gallop from Havre to Paris?"

"Does your secretary take such liberties?" said Modeste, turning pale, and throwing the whip to Francoise with an impetuosity that expressed scorn. "Give me your whip, papa."

"Poor Ernest, who lies there on his bed half-dead with fatigue!" said Canalis, overtaking the girl, who had already started at a gallop. "You are pitiless, mademoiselle. 'I have' (the poor fellow said to me) 'only this one chance to remain in her memory.'"

"And should you think well of a woman who could take presents from half the parish?" said Modeste.

She was surprised to receive no answer to this inquiry, and attributed the poet's inattention to the noise of the horse's feet.

"How you delight in tormenting those who love you," said the duke. "Your nobility of soul and your pride are so inconsistent with your faults that I begin to suspect you calumniate yourself, and do those naughty things on purpose."

"Ah! have you only just found that out, Monsieur le Duc?" she exclaimed, laughing. "You have the sagacity of a husband."

They rode half a mile in silence. Modeste was a good deal astonished not to receive the fire of the poet's eyes. The evening before, as she was pointing out to him an admirable effect of setting sunlight across the water, she had said, remarking his inattention, "Well, don't you see it?"—to which he replied, "I can see only your hand;" but now his admiration for the beauties of nature seemed a little too intense to be natural.

"Does Monsieur de la Brière know how to ride?" she asked, for the purpose of teasing him.

"Not very well, but he gets along," answered the poet, cold as Gobenheim before the colonel's return.

At a cross-road, which Monsieur Mignon made them take, to go through a lovely valley to reach a hill overlooking the Seine, Canalis allowed Modeste and the duke to pass him, and then reined up to join the colonel.

"Monsieur le Comte," he said, "you are an open-hearted soldier, and I know you will regard my frankness as a title to your esteem. When proposals of marriage, with all their brutal—or, if you please, too civilized—discussions, are carried on by third parties, it is an injury to all. We are both gentlemen, and both discreet; and you, like myself, have passed beyond the age of surprises. Let us therefore speak as intimates. I will set you the example. I am twenty-nine years old, without landed estates, and full of ambition. Mademoiselle Modeste,

as you must have perceived, pleases me extremely. Now, in spite of the little defects which your dear girl assumes occasionally—"

"—not counting those she really possesses," said the colonel, smiling—

"—I should gladly make her my wife, and I believe I could render her happy. The question of money is of the utmost importance to my future, which hangs to-day in the balance. All young girls expect to be loved *whether or no*—fortune or no fortune. But you are not the man to marry your dear Modeste without a *dot*, and my situation does not allow me to make a marriage of what is called love unless with a woman who has a fortune at least equal to mine. I have, from my emoluments and sinecures, from the Academy and from my works, about thirty thousand francs a year, a large income for a bachelor. If my wife brought me as much more, I should still be in about the same condition that I am now. Shall you give Mademoiselle Modeste a million?"

"Ah, monsieur, we have not reached the point of figures yet," said the colonel, jesuitically.

"Then suppose," said Canalis, quickly, "that we go no farther. You shall have no cause to complain of me, Monsieur le Comte; the world shall consider me among the unfortunate suitors of your charming daughter. Give me your word of honor to say nothing on the subject to any one, not even to Mademoiselle Modeste, because," he added, as if in search of consolation, "my circumstances may so change that I can ask you for her without *dot*."

"I promise you that," said the colonel. "You know, monsieur, with what assurance the public, both in Paris and the provinces, talk of fortunes that are made and unmade. People exaggerate both happiness and unhappiness; we are never so fortunate nor so unfortunate as people say we are. There is nothing sure and certain in business except investments in land. I am awaiting the accounts of my agents with very great impatience. The sale of my merchandise and of my ship, and the settlement of my affairs in China, are not yet concluded; and I cannot know the full amount of my fortune for at least six months. I did, however, say to Monsieur de la Brière in Paris that I would guarantee a *dot* of two hundred thousand francs in ready money. I wish to entail my estates, and enable my grandchildren to inherit my arms and title."

Canalis did not listen to this statement after the opening sentence. The four riders, having now reached a wider road, went abreast and soon reached a stretch of table-land, from which the eye took in on one side the rich valley of the Seine toward Rouen, while on the other horizon the eye could distinguish the sea.

"Butscha was right. God is the greatest of all landscape painters," said Canalis, contemplating the view, which is unique among the many fine scenes that have made the shores of the Seine so justly celebrated.

"Especially do we feel that, my dear baron," said the duke, "on hunting-days, when nature has a voice, and a lively tumult breaks the silence: at such times the landscape, changing rapidly as we ride through it, seems really sublime."

"The sun is the inexhaustible palette," said Modeste, looking at the poet in a species of bewilderment.

A remark that she presently made on his absence of mind gave him an opportunity of saying that he was just then absorbed in his own thoughts—an excuse that authors have more reason for giving than other men.

"Are we really made happy by carrying our lives into the midst of the world, and swelling them with all sorts of fictitious wants and overexcited vanities?" said Modeste, moved by the aspect of the fertile and billowy country to long for a philosophically tranquil life.

"That bucolic, mademoiselle, is always written on tablets of gold," said the poet.

"And sometimes under garret-roofs," remarked the colonel.

Modeste threw a piercing glance at

Canalis, which he was unable to sustain; she was conscious of a ringing in her ears, darkness seemed to spread before her, and then she suddenly exclaimed in icy tones—

"Ah! it is Wednesday!"

"I do not say this to flatter your passing caprice, mademoiselle," said the duke, to whom the little scene, so tragical for Modeste, had left time for thought; "but I declare I am so profoundly disgusted with the world and the court and Paris, that had I a Duchesse d'Hérouville, gifted with the wit and graces of mademoiselle, I would gladly bind myself to live like a philosopher at my château, doing good around me, draining my marshes, educating my children—"

"That, Monsieur le Duc, will be set to the account of your great goodness," said Modeste, letting her eyes rest steadily on the noble gentleman. "You flatter me in not thinking me frivolous, and in believing that I have enough resources within myself to be able to live in solitude. It is perhaps my lot," she added, glancing at Canalis with an expression of pity.

"It is the lot of all insignificant fortunes," said the poet. "Paris demands Babylonian splendor. Sometimes I ask myself how I have ever managed to keep it up."

"The king does that for both of us," said the duke, candidly; "we live on his majesty's bounty. If my family had not been allowed, after the death of Monsieur le Grand, as they called Cinq-Mars, to keep his office among us, we should have been obliged to sell Hérouville to the Black Brethren. Ah, believe me, mademoiselle, it is a bitter humiliation to me to have to think of money in marrying."

The simple honesty of this confession came from his heart, and the regret was so sincere that it touched Modeste.

"In these days," said the poet, "no man in France, Monsieur le Duc, is rich enough to marry a woman for herself, her personal worth, her grace, or her beauty—"

The colonel looked at Canalis with a curious eye, after first watching Modeste, whose face no longer expressed the silghtest astonishment.

"For persons of high honor," he said slowly, "it is a noble employment of wealth to destine it to the reparation of the ravages of time and destiny, and to restore the old historic families."

"Yes, papa," said Modeste, gravely.

The colonel invited the duke and Canalis to dine with him sociably in their riding-dress, promising them to make no change himself. When Modeste went to her room to make her toilet, she looked at the jeweled whip she had disdained in the morning.

"What workmanship they put into such things nowadays!" she said to Françoise Cochet, who had become her waiting-maid.

"That poor young man, mademoiselle, who has got a fever—"

"Who told you that?"

"Monsieur Butscha. He came here this afternoon and asked me to say to you that he hoped you would notice he had kept his word on the appointed day."

Modeste came down into the salon dressed with royal simplicity.

"My dear father," she said aloud, taking the colonel by the arm, "please go and ask after Monsieur de la Brière's health, and take him back his present. You can say that my small means, as well as my natural tastes, forbid my wearing ornaments which are only suitable for queens or courtesans. Besides, I can only accept gifts from a bridegroom. Beg him to keep the whip until you know whether you are rich enough to buy it back."

"My little girl has plenty of good sense," said the colonel, kissing his daughter on the forehead.

Canalis took advantage of a conversation which began between the duke and Madame Mignon to escape to the terrace, where Modeste joined him, influenced by curiosity, though the poet believed her to be led by her desire to become Madame de Canalis. Rather alarmed at the indecency with which he had just executed what soldiers call an about-face, which, according to the laws of ambition, every

man in his position would have executed quite as brutally, he now endeavored, as the unfortunate Modeste approached him, to find plausible excuses for his conduct.

"Dear Modeste," he began, in a coaxing tone, "considering the terms on which we stand to each other, shall I displease you if I say that your replies to the Duc d'Hérouville were very painful to a man in love—above all, to a poet whose soul is feminine, nervous, full of the jealousies of true passion. I should make a poor diplomatist indeed if I had not perceived that your first coquetries, your little premeditated inconsistencies, were only assumed for the purpose of studying our characters—"

Modeste raised her head with the rapid, intelligent, half-coquettish motion of a wild animal, in whom instinct produces such miracles of grace.

"—and therefore when I returned home and thought them over, they never misled me. I only marveled at a cleverness so in harmony with your character and your countenance. Do not be uneasy, I never doubted that your assumed duplicity covered an angelic candor. No, your mind, your education, have in no way lessened the precious innocence which we demand in a wife. You are indeed a wife for a poet, a diplomatist, a thinker, a man destined to endure the chances and changes of life; and my admiration is equaled only by the attachment I feel to you. I now entreat you—if yesterday you were not playing a little comedy when you accepted the love of a man whose vanity will change to pride if you accept him, one whose defects will become virtues under your divine influence—I entreat you do not excite a passion which, in him, amounts to vice. Jealousy is a noxious element in my soul, and you have revealed to me its strength; it is awful, it destroys everything— Oh! I do not mean the jealousy of an Othello," he continued, noticing Modeste's gesture. "No, no; my thoughts were of myself: I have been so indulged on that point. You know the unique affection to which I owe all the happiness I have ever enjoyed—very little at the best [he sadly shook his head]. Love is symbolized among all nations as a child, because it fancies the world belongs to it, and it cannot conceive otherwise. Well, Nature herself set the limit to that sentiment. It was still-born. A tender, maternal soul guessed and calmed the painful constriction of my heart—for a woman who feels, who knows, that she is past the joys of love becomes angelic in her treatment of others. The duchess has never made me suffer in my sensibilities. For ten years there has not been a word or look that could wound me! I attach more value to words, to thoughts, to looks, than ordinary men. If a look is to me a treasure beyond all price, the slightest doubt is deadly poison; it acts instantaneously, and my love dies. I believe—contrary to the mass of men, who delight in trembling, hoping, expecting—that love can only exist in perfect, infantile, and infinite security. The exquisite purgatory, where women delight to send us by their coquetry, is a base happiness to which I will not submit: to me, love is either heaven or hell. If it is hell, I will have none of it. I feel an affinity with the azure skies of Paradise within my soul. I can give myself without reserve, without secrets, doubts or deceptions, in the life to come; and I demand reciprocity. Perhaps I offend you by these doubts. Remember, however, that I am only talking of myself—"

"—a good deal, but never too much," said Modeste, wounded by every stab in this discourse, in which the Duchesse de Chaulieu served as a dagger. "I am in the habit of admiring you, my dear poet."

"Well then, can you promise me the same canine fidelity which I offer to you? Is it not beautiful? Is it not just what you have longed for?"

"But why, dear poet, do you not marry a deaf-mute, and one who is also something of an idiot? I ask nothing better than to please my husband. But you threaten to take away from a girl the very happiness you so kindly arrange for her; you are tearing away every gesture, every word, every look; you cut the wings of your bird, and then expect it to hover about you. I know poets are

accused of inconsistency — oh! very unjustly," she added, as Canalis made a gesture of denial; "that alleged defect comes from the brilliant activity of their minds which commonplace people cannot take into account. I do not believe, however, that a man of genius can invent such irreconcilable conditions and call his invention life. You are requiring the impossible solely for the pleasure of putting me in the wrong—like the enchanters in fairy-tales, who set tasks to persecuted young girls who are rescued by good fairies."

"In this case the good fairy would be true love," said Canalis in a curt tone, aware that his elaborate excuse for a rupture was seen through by the keen and delicate mind which Butscha had piloted so well.

"My dear poet, you remind me of those fathers who inquire into a girl's *dot* before they are willing to name that of their son. You are quarreling with me without knowing whether you have the slightest right to do so. Love is not gained by such dry arguments as yours. The poor duke, on the contrary, gives himself up to it with the *abandon* of Uncle Toby; with this difference, that I am not the Widow Wadman — though widowed, indeed, of many illusions as to poetry at the present moment. Ah, yes, we young girls will not believe in anything that disturbs our world of fancy! I was warned of all this beforehand. My dear poet, you are attempting to get up a quarrel which is unworthy of you. I no longer recognize the Melchior of yesterday."

"Because Melchior has discovered a spirit of ambition in you which—"

Modeste looked at him from head to foot with an imperial eye.

"But I shall be peer of France and embassador as well as he," added Canalis.

"You take me for a bourgeoise," she said, beginning to mount the steps of the portico; but she instantly turned back and added, "That is less impertinent than to take me for a fool. The change in your conduct comes from certain silly rumors which you have heard in Havre, and which my maid Francoise has repeated to me."

"Ah, Modeste! how can you think it?" said Canalis, striking a dramatic attitude. "Do you think me capable of marrying you only for your money?"

"If I do you that wrong after your edifying remarks on the banks of the Seine you can easily undeceive me," she said, annihilating him with her scorn.

"Ah!" thought the poet, as he followed her into the house, "if you think, my little girl, that I'm to be caught in that net, you take me to be younger than I am. Dear, dear, what a fuss about an artful little thing whose esteem I value about as much as that of the king of Borneo. But she has given me a good reason for the rupture by accusing me of such unworthy sentiments. Isn't she sly? La Brière will get a burden on his back—idiot that he is! And five years hence it will be a good joke to see them together."

The coldness which this altercation produced between Modeste and Canalis was visible to all eyes that evening. The poet went off early, on the ground of La Brière's illness, leaving the field to the grand equerry. About eleven o'clock Butscha, who had come to walk home with Madame Latournelle, whispered in Modeste's ear, "Was I right?"

"Alas, yes," she said.

"But I hope you have left the door half open, so that he can come back; we agreed upon that, you know."

"Anger got the better of me," said Modeste. "Such meanness sent the blood to my head and I told him what I thought of him."

"Well, so much the better. When you are both so angry that you can't speak civilly to each other I engage to make him desperately in love and so pressing that you will be deceived yourself."

"Remember, Butscha; he is a great poet; he is a gentleman; he is a man of intellect."

"Your father's eight millions are more to him than all that."

"Eight millions!" exclaimed Modeste.

"My master, who has sold his practice, is going to Provence to attend to the purchase of lands which your father's agent has suggested to him. The sum that is to be paid for the estate of La Bastie is four millions; your father has agreed to it. You are to have a *dot* of two millions and another million for an establishment in Paris, a hôtel and furniture. Now, count up."

"Ah! then I can be Duchesse d'Hérouville!" cried Modeste, glancing at Butscha.

"If it hadn't been for that comedian of a Canalis you would have kept *his* whip, thinking it came from me," said the dwarf, indirectly pleading La Brière's cause.

"Monsieur Butscha, may I ask if I am to marry to please you?" said Modeste, laughing.

"That fine fellow loves you as well as I do—and you loved him for eight days," retorted Butscha; "and *he* has got a heart."

"Can he compete, pray, with an office

under the crown? There are but six, grand almoner, chancellor, grand chamberlain, grand master, high constable, grand admiral — but they don't appoint high constables any longer."

"In six months, mademoiselle, the people—who are made up of wicked Butschas —could send all those grand dignities to the winds. Besides, what signifies nobility in these days? There are not a thousand real noblemen in France. The D'Hérouvilles are descended from a tipstaff in the time of Robert of Normandy. You will have to put up with many a vexation from that old aunt with the furrowed face. Look here—as you are so anxious for the title of duchess—you belong to the Comtat, and the Pope will certainly think as much of you as he does of all those merchants down there; he'll sell you a duchy with some name ending in *ia* or *agno*. Don't play away your happiness for an office under the crown."

XXV.

CANALIS'S reflections during the night were thoroughly matter-of-fact. He saw nothing worse in life than the situation of a married man without money. Still trembling at the danger he had been led into by his vanity, his desire to get the better of the duke, and his belief in the Mignon millions, he began to ask himself what the duchess must be thinking of his stay in Havre, which had been aggravated by the fact that he had not written to her for fourteen days, whereas in Paris they exchanged four or five letters a week.

"And that poor woman is working hard to get me appointed commander of the Legion and embassador to the court of Baden!" he cried.

Thereupon, with that promptitude of decision which results—in poets as well as in speculators—from a lively intuition of the future, he sat down and composed the following letter:—

"*To Madame la Duchesse de Chaulieu:*

"MY DEAR ELEONORE — You have doubtless been surprised at not hearing from me; but the stay I am making in this place is not altogether on account of my health. I have been trying to do a good turn to our little friend La Brière. The poor fellow has fallen in love with a certain Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie, a rather pale and insignificant little thing, who, by the way, has the vice of liking literature, and calls herself a poet to excuse the caprices and humors of a rather sullen nature. You know Ernest—he is so easy to catch that I have been afraid to leave him alone. Mademoiselle de la Bastie was inclined to coquet with your Melchior, and was only too ready to become your rival, though her arms are thin, and she has no more bust than most girls; moreover, her hair is as dead and colorless as that of Madame de Rochefide, and her eyes small, gray, and very suspicious. I put a stop—perhaps rather brutally—to the attentions of Mademoiselle Immodeste; but love, such as mine for you, demanded it. What care I for all the women on earth—compared to you, what are they?

"The people with whom I pass my time, and who form the circle round the heiress, are so thoroughly bourgeois that they almost turn my stomach. Pity me; only fancy! I pass my evenings with notaries, notaresses, cashiers, provincial money-lenders—ah! what a change from my evenings in the Rue de Grenelle. The alleged fortune of the father, lately returned from China, has brought to Havre that indefatigable suitor, the grand equerry, hungry after the millions, which he wants, they say, to drain his marshes. The king does not know what a fatal present he made the duke in those waste lands. His grace, who has not yet found out that the lady has only a small fortune, is jealous of *me*; for La Brière is quietly making progress with his idol under cover of his friend, who serves as a blind.

"Notwithstanding Ernest's romantic ecstasies, I myself, a poet, think chiefly of the essential thing, and I have been making some inquiries which darken the prospects of our friend. If my angel would like absolution for some of our little sins, will she try to find out the facts of the case by sending for Mongenod, the banker, and questioning him, with her own dexterity, as to the father's fortune? Monsieur Mignon, formerly colonel of cavalry in the Imperial Guard, has been for the last seven years a correspondent of the Mongenods. It is said that he gives his daughter a *dot* of two hundred thousand francs, and before I make the offer on Ernest's behalf I am anxious to get the truth of the story. As soon as the affair is arranged I shall return to Paris. I know a way to settle everything to the advantage of our young lover—simply by the transmission of the father-in-law's title, and no one, I think, can more readily obtain that favor than Ernest, both on account of his own services and the influence which you and I and the duke can exert for him.

With his tastes, Ernest, who of course will step into my office when I go to Baden, will be perfectly happy in Paris with twenty-five thousand francs a year, a permanent place, and a wife—unfortunate fellow!

"Ah, dearest, how I long for the Rue de Grenelle! Fifteen days of absence! when they do not kill love, they revive all the ardor of its earlier days, and you know, better than I, perhaps, the reasons that make my love eternal — my bones will love thee even in the grave! Ah! I cannot bear this separation. If I am forced to stay here another ten days, I shall make a flying visit of a few hours to Paris.

"Has the duke obtained for me the thing we wanted; and shall you, my dearest life, be ordered to drink the Baden waters next year? The billing and cooing of the 'handsome disconsolate,' compared with the accents of our happy love—so true and changeless for now ten years!—have given me a great contempt for marriage. I had never seen the thing so near. Ah, dearest! what the world calls a 'false step' binds two beings closer than the law—does it not?"

The concluding idea served as a text for two pages of reminiscences and aspirations a little too confidential for publication.

The evening before the day on which Canalis put the above epistle into the post, Butscha, under the name of Jean Jacmin, had received a letter from his fictitious cousin, Philoxène, and had mailed his answer, which thus preceded the letter of the poet by about twelve hours. Terribly anxious for the last two weeks, and wounded by Melchior's silence, the duchess herself dictated Philoxène's letter to her cousin, and the moment she had read the answer, rather too explicit for her vanity, she sent for the banker and made close inquiries as to the exact fortune of Monsieur Mignon. Finding herself betrayed and abandoned for the millions, Eleonore gave way to a paroxysm of anger, hatred, and cold vindictiveness. Philoxène knocked at the door of the sumptuous room, and entering found her mistress with her eyes full of tears—so unprecedented a phenomenon in the fifteen years she had waited upon her that the woman stopped short stupefied.

"We expiate the happiness of ten years in ten minutes," she heard the duchess say.

"A letter from Havre, madame."

Eleonore read the poet's prose without noticing the presence of Philoxène, whose amazement became still greater when she saw the dawn of fresh serenity on the duchess's face as she read further and further into the letter. Hold out a pole no thicker than a walking-stick to a drowning man, and he will think it a royal road of safety. The happy Eleonore believed in Canalis's good faith when she had read through the four pages in which love and business, falsehood and truth, ojstled each other. She who, a few moments earlier, had sent for her husband to prevent Melchior's appointment while there was still time, was now seized with a spirit of generosity that amounted almost to the sublime.

"Poor fellow!" she thought; "he has not had one faithless thought; he loves me as he did on the first day; he tells me all— Philoxène!" she cried, noticing her maid, who was standing near and pretending to arrange the toilet-table.

"Madame la Duchesse?"

"A mirror, child!"

Eleonore looked at herself, saw the fine razor-like lines traced on her brow, which disappeared at a little distance; she sighed, and in that sigh she felt she bade adieu to love. A brave thought came into her mind, a manly thought, outside of all the pettiness of women—a thought which intoxicates for a moment, and which explains, perhaps, the clemency of the Semiramis of Russia, when she married her young and beautiful rival to Momonoff.

"Since he has not been faithless, he shall have the girl and her millions," she thought—"provided Mademoiselle Mignon is as ugly as he says she is."

Three raps, elegantly given, announced the duke, and his wife went herself to the door to let him in.

"Ah! I see you are better, my dear," he cried, with the counterfeit joy that courtiers assume so easily, and by which fools are so readily taken in.

"My dear Henri," she answered, "why is it you have not yet obtained that appointment for Melchior—you who sacrificed so much to the king in taking a ministry which you knew could only last one year."

The duke glanced at Philoxène, who showed him by an almost imperceptible sign the letter from Havre on the dressing-table.

"You would be terribly bored at Baden and come back at daggers drawn with Melchior," said the duke.

"Pray why?"

"Why, you would always be together," said the former diplomat, with comic good-humor.

"Oh, no," she said; "I am going to get him married."

"If we can believe d'Hérouville, our dear Canalis stands in no need of your help in that direction," said the duke, smiling. "Yesterday Grandlieu read me some passages from a letter the grand equerry had written him. No doubt they were dictated by the aunt for the express purpose of their reaching you, for Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, always on the scent of a *dot,* knows that Grandlieu and I play whist nearly every evening. That good little d'Hérouville wants the Prince de Cadignan to go down and give a royal hunt in Normandy, and endeavor to persuade the king to be present, so as to turn the head of the damozel when she sees herself the object of such a grand affair. In short, two words from Charles X. would settle the matter. D'Hérouville says the girl has incomparable beauty—"

"Henri, let us go to Havre!" cried the duchess, interrupting him.

"Under what pretext?" said her husband, gravely; he had been one of the confidants of Louis XVIII.

"I never saw a hunt."

"It would be all very well if the king went; but it is a terrible bore to go so far, and he will not do it; I have just been speaking with him about it."

"Perhaps Madame would go?"

"That would be better," returned the duke. "I daresay the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse would help you to persuade her from Rosny. If she goes, the king will not be displeased at the use of his hunting equipage. Don't go to Havre, my dear," added the duke, paternally, "that would be giving yourself away. Come, here's a better plan, I think. Gaspard's château of Rosembray is on the other side of the forest of Brotonne; why not give him a hint to invite the whole party?"

"He invite them?" said Eleonore.

"I mean, of course, the duchess; she is always engaged in pious works with Mademoiselle d'Hérouville; give that old maid a hint, and get her to speak to Gaspard."

"You are a love of a man," cried Eleonore; "I'll write to the old maid and to Diane at once, for we must get hunting things made—a riding hat makes one look so young. Did you win last night at the English embassy?"

"Yes," said the duke; "I cleared myself."

"Henri, above all things, stop proceedings about Melchior's two appointments."

After writing half a dozen lines to the beautiful Diane de Maufrigneuse, and a short hint to Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, Eleonore sent the following answer like the lash of a whip through the poet's lies.

"*To Monsieur le Baron de Canalis:*

"MY DEAR POET—Mademoiselle de la Bastie is very beautiful; Mongenod has proved to me that her father has millions. I did think of marrying you to her; I am therefore much displeased at your want of confidence. If you had any intention of marrying La Brière when you went to Havre it is surprising that you said nothing to me about it before you started. And why have you omitted writing to a friend who is so easily made anxious as I? Your letter arrived a trifle late; I had already seen the banker. You are a child, Melchior, and you are playing tricks with us. It is not right. The duke himself is quite indignant at your proceedings.

"I desire to see things for myself. I shall, I believe, have the honor of accompanying Madame to the hunt which the Duc d'Hérouville proposes to give for Mademoiselle de la Bastie. I will manage to have you invited to Rosembray, for the meet will probably take place in Duc de Verneuil's park.

"Pray believe, my dear poet, that I am none the less, for life,

"Your friend, ELEONORE DE M."

"There, Ernest, just look at that!" cried Canalis, tossing the letter at Ernest's nose across the breakfast-table; "that's the two thousandth love-letter I have had from that woman, and there isn't even a 'thou' in it. The illustrious Eleonore has never compromised herself more than she does there. Marry, if you like. The worst marriage in the world is better than this sort of halter. Ah, I am the greatest Nicodemus that ever tumbled out of the moon! Modeste has millions, and I've lost her; for we can't get back from the poles, where we are to-day, to the tropics, where we were three days ago! Well, I am all the more anxious for your triumph over the grand equerry, because I told the duchess I came here only for your sake; and so I shall do my best for you."

"Alas, Melchior, Modeste must needs have so noble, so grand, so well-balanced a nature to resist the glories of the court, and all these splendors cleverly displayed for her honor and glory by the duke, that I cannot believe in the existence of such perfection—and yet, if she is still the Modeste of her letters, there might be hope!"

"Well, well, you are a happy fellow,

you young Boniface, to see the world and your mistress through such green spectacles!" cried Canalis, marching off to pace up and down the garden.

Caught between two lies, the poet was at a loss what to do.

"Play by rule, and you lose!" he cried presently, sitting down in the kiosk. "Every man of sense would have acted as I did four days ago, and got himself out of the net in which I saw myself. At such times people don't disentangle nets, they break through them! Come, let us be calm, cold, dignified, affronted. Honor requires it; English stiffness is the only way to win her back. After all, if I have to retire finally, I can always fall back on my old happiness; a fidelity of ten years can't go unrewarded. Eleonore will arrange some good marriage for me."

XXVI.

THE hunt was destined to be a rendezvous of all the passions excited by the colonel's millions and Modeste's beauty; and it came as a truce between the adversaries. During the days required for its arrangement the salon of the villa Mignon presented the tranquil picture of a united family. Canalis, cut short in his rôle of injured love by Modeste's quick perceptions, wished to appear courteous; he laid aside his pretensions, gave no further specimens of his oratory, and became, what all men of intellect can be when they renounce affectation, perfectly charming. He talked finances with Gobenheim, and war with the colonel, Germany with Madame Mignon, and housekeeping with Madame Latournelle—endeavoring to bias them all in favor of La Brière. The Duc d'Hérouville left the field to his rivals, for he was obliged to go to Rosembray to consult with the Duc de Verneuil, and see that the orders of the Royal Huntsman, the Prince de Cadignan, were carried out. And yet the comic element was not altogether wanting. Modeste found herself between the depreciatory hints of Canalis as to the gallantry of the grand equerry, and the exaggerations of the two Mesdemoiselles d'Hérouville, who passed every evening at the villa. Canalis made Modeste take notice that, instead of being the heroine of the hunt, she would scarcely be noticed. Madame would be attended by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, daughter-in-law of the Prince de Cadignan, by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, and other great ladies of the court, among whom a little girl like her could produce no sensation; no doubt the officers in garrison at Rouen would be invited, etc. Helene, on the other hand, was incessantly telling her new friend, whom she already looked upon as a sister-in-law, that she was to be presented to Madame; undoubtedly the Duc de Verneuil would invite her father and herself to stay at Rosembray; if the colonel wished to obtain a favor of the king—a peerage, for instance—the opportunity was unique, for there was hope of the king himself being present on the third day; she would be delighted with the charming welcome with which the beauties of the court, the Duchesse de Chaulieu, de Maufrigneuse, de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, and other ladies, were prepared to meet her.

It was in fact an excessively amusing little warfare, with its marches and countermarches and stratagems—all of which were keenly enjoyed by the Dumays, the Latournelles, Gobenheim, and Butscha, who, in conclave assembled, said horrible things of these noble personages, cruelly noting and intelligently studying all their little meannesses.

The promises on the d'Hérouville side were, however, confirmed by the arrival of an invitation, couched in flattering terms, from the Duc de Verneuil and the Master of the Hunt to Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie and his daughter, to stay at Rosembray and be present at a grand hunt on the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth of the following November.

La Brière, full of dark presentiments, enjoyed the presence of Modeste with an eagerness whose bitter joys are known only to lovers when they feel that they are parted fatally from those they love. Flashes of joy came to him intermingled with melancholy meditations on the one theme, "I have lost her," and made him all the more interesting to those who watched him, because his face and his whole person were in keeping with his profound feeling. There is nothing more poetic than a living elegy, animated by a pair of eyes, walking about, and sighing without rhymes.

The Duc d'Hérouville arrived at last to arrange for Modeste's departure; after crossing the Seine she was to be conveyed in the duke's calèche, accompanied by the Demoiselles d'Hérouville. The duke was charmingly courteous; he begged Canalis and La Brière to be of the party, assuring them, as he did the colonel, that he had taken particular care that hunters should be provided for them. The colonel invited the three lovers to break-

fast on the morning of the start. Canalis then began to put into execution a plan that he had been maturing in his own mind for the last few days; namely, to quietly reconquer Modeste, and throw over the duchess, La Brière, and the duke. A graduate of diplomacy could hardly remain long in the position in which he found himself. On the other hand, La Brière had come to the resolution of bidding Modeste an eternal farewell. Each suitor was therefore on the watch to slip in a last word, like the defendant's counsel to the court before judgment is pronounced; for all felt that the three weeks' struggle was approaching its conclusion. After dinner on the evening before the start, the colonel had taken his daughter by the arm and made her feel the necessity of deciding.

"Our position with the d'Hérouville family will be quite intolerable at Rosembray," he said to her. "Do you mean to be a duchess?"

"No, father," she answered.

"Then do you love Canalis?"

"No, papa, a thousand times no!" she exclaimed with the impatience of a child.

The colonel looked at her with a sort of joy.

"Ah, I have not influenced you," cried the true father, "and I will now confess that I chose my son-in-law in Paris when, having made him believe that I had but little fortune, he grasped my hand and told me I took a weight from his mind—"

"Who is it you mean?" asked Modeste, coloring.

"*The man of fixed principles and sound morality*," said her father, slyly, repeating the words which had dissolved poor Modeste's dream on the day after his return.

"I was not even thinking of him, papa. I beg of you to leave me at liberty to refuse the duke myself; I understand him, and I know how to soften it to him."

"Then your choice is not made?"

"Not yet; there is another syllable or two in the charade of my destiny still to be guessed; but after I have had a glimpse of court life at Rosembray I will tell you my secret."

"Ah! Monsieur de la Brière," cried the colonel, as the young man approached them along the garden path in which they were walking. "I hope you are going to this hunt?"

"No, colonel," answered Ernest. "I have come to take leave of you and of mademoiselle; I return to Paris—"

"You have no curiosity," said Modeste, interrupting, and looking at him.

"A wish—but one I cannot expect—would suffice to keep me," he replied.

"If that is all, you must stay to please me; I wish it," said the colonel, going forward to meet Canalis, and leaving his daughter and La Brière together for a moment.

"Mademoiselle," said the young man, raising his eyes to hers with the boldness of a man without hope, "I have an entreaty to make of you."

"Of me?"

"Let me carry away with me your forgiveness. My life can never be happy; it must be full of remorse for having lost my happiness — no doubt by my own fault; but, at least—"

"Before we part forever," said Modeste, interrupting him, and speaking in a voice of emotion, "I wish to ask you one thing; and though you once disguised yourself, I think you cannot be so base as to deceive me now."

The taunt made him turn pale, and he cried out, "Oh, you are pitiless!"

"Will you be frank?"

"You have the right to ask me that degrading question," he said, in a voice weakened by the violent palpitation of his heart.

"Well, then, did you read my letters to Monsieur de Canalis?"

"No, mademoiselle; I only allowed your father to read them to justify my love by showing him how it was born, and how sincere my efforts had been to cure you of your fancy."

"But how came the idea of that unworthy masquerading ever to arise?" she said, with a sort of impatience.

La Brière related truthfully the scene in the poet's study which Modeste's first letter had occasioned, and the sort of challenge that resulted from his expressing a favorable opinion of a young girl thus led toward a poet's fame, as a plant seeks its share of the sun.

"You have said enough," answered Modeste, restraining some emotion. "If you have not my heart, monsieur, you have at least my esteem."

These simple words gave the young man a violent shock; feeling himself stagger, he leaned against a tree, like a man deprived for a moment of reason. Modeste, who had left him, turned her head and came hastily back.

"What is the matter?" she asked, taking his hand to prevent him from falling.

"Forgive me—I thought you despised me."

"But," she answered, distantly, "I did not say that I loved you."

And she left him again. But this time,

in spite of her harshness, La Brière thought he walked on air; the earth softened under his feet, the trees bore flowers; the skies were rosy, the air cerulean, as they are in the temples of Hymen in those fairy pantomimes which finish happily. In such situations every woman is a Janus, and sees behind her without turning round; and thus Modeste perceived on the face of her lover the indubitable symptoms of a love like Butscha's—surely the *ne plus ultra* of a woman's hope. Moreover, the great value which La Brière attached to her opinion filled Modeste with an emotion that was inestimably sweet.

"Mademoiselle," said Canalis, leaving the colonel and waylaying Modeste, "in spite of the little value you attach to my sentiments, my honor is concerned in effacing a stain under which I have suffered too long. Here is a letter which I received from the Duchesse de Chaulieu five days after my arrival in Havre."

He let Modeste read the first lines of the letter we have seen, which the duchess began by saying that she had seen Mongenod, and now wished to marry her poet to Modeste; then he tore that passage from the body of the letter, and placed the fragment in her hand.

"I cannot let you read the rest," he said, putting the paper in his pocket; "but I confide these few lines to your discretion, so that you may verify the writing. A young girl who could accuse me of ignoble sentiments is quite capable of suspecting some collusion, some trickery. Ah, Modeste," he said, with tears in his voice, "your poet, the poet of Madame de Chaulieu, has no less poetry in his heart than in his mind. You are about to see the duchess; suspend your judgment of me till then."

He left Modeste half bewildered.

"Oh, dear!" she said to herself; "it seems they are all angels—and not marriageable; the duke is the only one that belongs to humanity."

"Mademoiselle Modeste," said Butscha, appearing with a parcel under his arm, "this hunt makes me very uneasy. I dreamed your horse ran away with you, and I have been to Rouen to see if I could get a Spanish bit, which, they tell me, a horse can't take between his teeth. I entreat you to use it. I have shown it to the colonel, and he has thanked me more than there is any occasion for."

"Poor, dear Butscha!" cried Modeste, moved to tears by this forethought.

Butscha went skipping off like a man who has just heard of the death of a rich uncle.

"My dear father," said Modeste, returning to the salon; "I should like to have that beautiful whip—suppose you were to ask Monsieur de la Brière to exchange it for your picture by Van Ostade."

Modeste looked furtively at Ernest, while the colonel made him this proposition, standing before the picture which was the sole thing he possessed in memory of his campaigns, having bought it of a burgher at Ratisbon; and she said to herself as La Brière left the room precipitately, "He will be at the hunt."

It was curious, but Modeste's three lovers each and all went to Rosembray with their hearts full of hope, and captivated by her many perfections.

Rosembray—an estate lately purchased by the Duc de Verneuil, with the money which fell to him as his share of the thousand millions voted as indemnity for the sale of the lands of the emigrants—was remarkable for its château, whose magnificence compared only with that of Mesnière or of Balleroy. This imposing and noble edifice was approached by a wide avenue of four rows of venerable elms, from which the visitor entered an immense rising courtyard, like that of Versailles, with magnificent iron railings and two lodges, and adorned with rows of large orange-trees in their tubs. Facing this courtyard, the chateau presented, between two fronts of the main building which retreated on either side of this projection, a double row of nineteen tall windows, with carved arches and diamond panes, divided from each other by a series of fluted pilasters surmounted by an entablature which hid an Italian roof, from which rose several stone chimneys masked by carved trophies of arms. Rosembray was built, under Louis XIV., by a *fermier-général* named Cottin. The facade toward the park differed from that on the courtyard by having a narrower projection in the center, with columns between five windows, above which rose a magnificent pediment. The family of Marigny, to whom the estates of this Cottin were brought in marriage by Mademoiselle Cottin, her father's sole heiress, ordered a sunrise to be carved on this pediment by Coysevox. Beneath it were two angels unwinding a scroll, on which was cut this motto in honor of the Grand Monarch, *Sol nobis benignus.*

From the portico, reached by two grand circular and balustraded flights of steps, the view extended over an immense fishpond, as long and wide as the grand canal at Versailles, beginning at the foot of a grass-plot which compared well with the

finest English lawns, and bordered with beds and baskets, then filled with the brilliant flowers of autumn. On either side of the piece of water two gardens, laid out in the French style, displayed their squares and long straight paths, like brilliant pages written in the ciphers of Lenôtre. These gardens were backed to their whole length by a border of nearly thirty acres of woodland. From the terrace the view was bounded by a forest belonging to Rosembray and contiguous to two other forests, one of which belonged to the crown, the other to the State. It would be difficult to find a nobler landscape.

XXVII.

MODESTE'S arrival made a certain sensation in the avenue when the carriage with the liveries of France came in sight, accompanied by the grand equerry, the colonel, Canalis, and La Brière on horseback, preceded by an outrider in full dress, and followed by six servants — among whom were the negroes and the mulatto—and the britzka of the colonel for the two waiting-women and the luggage. The carriage was drawn by four horses, which were ridden by postilions dressed with an elegance specially commanded by the grand equerry, who was often better served than the king himself. As Modeste, dazzled by the magnificence of the great lords, entered and beheld this lesser Versailles, she suddenly remembered her approaching interview with the celebrated duchesses, and began to fear that she might seem awkward, or provincial, or parvenue; in fact, she lost her self-possession, and heartily repented having wished for a hunt.

Fortunately, however, as the carriage drew up, Modeste saw an old man, in a blonde wig frizzed into little curls, whose calm, plump, smooth face wore a fatherly smile and an expression of monastic cheerfulness which the half-veiled glance of the eye rendered almost noble. This was the Duc de Verneuil, master of Rosembray. The duchess, a woman of extreme piety, the only daughter of a rich and deceased chief-justice, spare and erect, and the mother of four children, resembled Madame Latournelle—if imagination can go so far as to adorn the notary's wife with the graces of a bearing like that of the duchess.

"Ah, good morning, dear Hortense!" said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, kissing the duchess with a sympathy that united their haughty natures; "let me present to you and to the dear duke our little angel, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

"We have heard so much of you, mademoiselle," said the duchess, "that we were in haste to receive you."

"And regret lost time," added the Duc de Verneuil, with courteous admiration.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie," said the grand equerry, taking the colonel by the arm and presenting him to the duke and duchess, with an air of respect in his tone and gesture.

"I am glad to welcome you, Monsieur le Comte!" said Monsieur de Verneuil. "You possess more than one treasure," he added, looking at Modeste.

The duchess took Modeste under her arm and led her into an immense salon, where a dozen or more women were grouped about the fire-place. The men of the party remained with the duke on the terrace, except Canalis, who respectfully made his way to the superb Eleonore. The Duchesse de Chaulieu, seated at an embroidery-frame, was showing Mademoiselle de Verneuil how to shade a flower.

If Modeste had run a needle through her finger when handling a pin-cushion she could not have felt a sharper prick than she received from the cold, haughty and contemptuous stare with which Madame de Chaulieu favored her. For an instant she saw nothing but that one woman, and she saw through her. To understand the depths of cruelty to which these charming creatures, who are deified by our passions, can go, we must see women with each other. Modeste would have disarmed almost any other than Eleonore by the involuntary admiration which her face betrayed. Had she not known the duchess's age she would have thought her a woman of thirty-six; but other and greater astonishments awaited her.

The poet had hurled himself against a great lady's anger. Such anger is the worst of sphinxes; the face is radiant, all the rest menacing. Kings themselves cannot make the exquisite politeness of a mistress's cold anger capitulate when she guards it with steel armor. Canalis tried to cling to the steel, but his fingers slipped on the polished surface, like his words on the heart; and the gracious face, the gracious words, the gracious bearing of the duchess hid the steel of her wrath, now fallen to twenty-five below zero, from all observers. The appearance of Modeste in her sublime beauty, and dressed as well as Diane de Maufrigneuse

herself, had fired the train of gunpowder which reflection had been laying in Eleonore's mind.

All the women had gone to the windows to see the new wonder get out of the royal carriage, attended by her three suitors.

"Do not let us seem so curious," Madame de Chaulieu had said, cut to the heart by Diane's exclamation, "She is divine! where in the world does she come from?"—and with that the bevy flew back to their seats, resuming their composure, though Eleonore's heart was full of hungry vipers all clamorous for a meal.

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville said in a low voice and with much meaning to the Duchesse de Verneuil, "Eleonore receives her Melchior very ungraciously."

"The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse thinks there is a coolness between them," said Laure de Verneuil, with simplicity.

Charming phrase! so often used in the world of society — how the north wind blows through it.

"Why so?" asked Modeste of the pretty young girl who had lately left the Sacré-Cœur.

"The great poet," said the pious duchess—making a sign to her daughter to be silent—"left Madame de Chaulieu without a letter for more than two weeks after he went to Havre, having told her that he went there for his health—"

Modeste made a hasty movement, which caught the attention of Laure, Helene, and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"—and during that time," continued the devout duchess, "she was endeavoring to have him appointed commander of the Legion of Honor, and minister at Baden."

"Oh, that was shameful in Canalis; he owes everything to her," exclaimed Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"Why did not Madame de Chaulieu come to Havre?" asked Modeste of Helene, innocently.

"My dear," said the Duchesse de Verneuil, "she would let herself be cut in little pieces without saying a word. Look at her—she is regal; her head would smile, like Mary Stuart's, after it was cut off; in fact, she has some of that blood in her veins."

"Did she not write to him?" asked Modeste.

"Diane tells me," answered the duchess, prompted by a nudge from Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, "that in answer to Canalis's first letter she made a cutting reply a few days ago."

This explanation made Modeste blush with shame for the man before her; she longed, not to crush him under her feet, but to revenge herself by one of those malicious acts that are sharper than a dagger's thrust. She looked haughtily at the Duchesse de Chaulieu—

"Monsieur Melchior!" she said.

All the women snuffed the air and looked alternately at the duchess, who was talking in a low voice to Canalis over the embroidery-frame, and then at the young girl so ill brought up as to disturb a lovers' meeting—a thing not permissible in any society. Diane de Maufrigneuse nodded, however, as much as to say, "The child is in the right of it." All the women ended by smiling at each other; they were enraged with a woman who was fifty-six years old and still handsome enough to put her fingers into the treasury and steal the rights of youth. Melchior looked at Modeste with feverish impatience, and made the gesture of a master to a valet, while the duchess lowered her head like a lioness disturbed at a meal; her eyes, fastened on the canvas, emitted red flames in the direction of the poet, which stabbed like epigrams, for each word revealed to her a triple insult.

"Monsieur Melchior!" said Modeste again in a voice that asserted its right to be heard.

"What, mademoiselle?" demanded the poet.

Forced to rise, he remained standing half-way between the embroidery frame, which was near a window, and the fireplace where Modeste was seated with the Duchesse de Verneuil on a sofa. What bitter reflections came into his ambitious mind, as he caught a glance from Eleonore. If he obeyed Modeste all was over, and forever, between himself and his protectress. Not to obey her was to avow his slavery, to lose the chances of his twenty-five days of base maneuvering, and to disregard the plainest laws of decency and civility. The greater the folly, the more imperatively the duchess exacted it. Modeste's beauty and money thus pitted against Eleonore's rights and influence made this hesitation between the man and his honor as terrible to witness as the peril of a matadore in the arena. A man seldom feels such palpitations as those which now came to Canalis, except, perhaps, before the green table, where his fortune or his ruin is about to be decided.

"Mademoiselle d'Hérouville hurried me from the carriage, and I left behind me," said Modeste to Canalis, "my handkerchief—"

Canalis shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"And," continued Modeste, taking no notice of his gesture, "I had tied into one corner of it the key of a desk which contains the fragment of an important letter; have the kindness, Monsieur Melchior, to get it for me."

Between an angel and a tiger equally enraged Canalis, who had turned livid, no longer hesitated—the tiger seemed to him the least dangerous of the two; and he was about to do as he was told, and commit himself irretrievably, when La Brière appeared at the door of the salon, seeming to his anguished mind like the archangel Gabriel tumbling from heaven.

"Ernest, here, Mademoiselle de la Bastie wants you," said the poet, hastily returning to his chair by the embroidery frame.

Ernest hastened to Modeste without bowing to any one; he saw only her, took his commission with undisguised joy, and darted from the room, with the secret approbation of every woman present.

"What an occupation for a poet!" said Modeste to Helene d'Hèrouville, glancing toward the embroidery at which the duchess was now working savagely.

"If you speak to her, if you ever look at her, all is over between us," said the duchess to the poet in a low voice, not at all satisfied with the very doubtful termination which Ernest's arrival had put to the scene; "and remember, if I am not present, I leave behind me eyes that will watch you."

So saying, the duchess, a woman of medium height, but a little too stout, like all women over fifty who retain their beauty, rose and walked toward the group which surrounded Diane de Maufrigneuse, walking daintily on little feet that were as slender and nervous as a deer's. Modeste, together with all the other antagonists of the duchess, recognized in her a woman of whom they were forced to say, "She eclipses us." In fact, Eleonore was one of the *grandes dames* now so rare.

Madame de Chaulieu bowed her head in salutation of Helene and her aunt; then, saying to Diane, in a pure and equable tone of voice, without a trace of emotion, "Is it not time to dress, duchess?" she made her exit, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville. As she left the room she spoke in an undertone to the old maid, who pressed her arm, saying, "You are charming,"—which meant, "I am grateful for the service you have just done us." After that, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville returned to the salon to play her part of spy, and her first glance apprised Canalis that the duchess had made him no empty threat. When Ernest returned, bringing Modeste's handkerchief, the poet seized his arm and took him out on the terrace.

"My dear friend," he said, "I am not only the most unfortunate man in the world, but I am also the most ridiculous; and I come to you to get me out of the hornet's nest into which I have run myself. Modeste is a demon; she sees my difficulty and she laughs at it; she has just spoken to me of a fragment of a letter of Madame de Chaulieu, which I had the folly to give her; if she shows it I can never make my peace with Eleonore. Therefore, will you at once ask Modeste to send me back that paper, and tell her, from me, that I make no pretensions to her hand. Say I count upon her delicacy, upon her propriety as a young girl, to behave to me as if we had never known each other. I beg her not to speak to me; I implore her to treat me harshly—though I hardly dare to ask her to feign a jealous anger, which would help my interests amazingly. Go, I will wait here for an answer."

XXVIII.

When he re-entered the salon Ernest de la Brière found there a young officer of the company of the Guard d'Havré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, who had just arrived from Rosny to announce that Madame was obliged to be present at the opening of the Chambers. We know the importance then attached to this constitutional solemnity, at which Charles X. delivered his speech, surrounded by the royal family—Madame la Dauphine and Madame being present in their gallery. The choice of the emissary charged with the duty of expressing the princess's regrets was an attention to Diane, who was then an object of adoration to this charming young man, son of a minister of state, gentleman in ordinary of the chamber, only son and heir to an immense fortune. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse permitted his attentions solely for the purpose of attracting notice to the age of his mother, Madame de Sérizy, who was said, in those chronicles that are whispered behind the fans, to have deprived her of the heart of the handsome Lucien de Rubempré.

"You will do us the pleasure, I hope, to remain at Rosembray," said the severe duchess to the young officer.

While opening her ears to every scan-

dal, the devout lady shut her eyes to the derelictions of her guests who had been carefully selected by the duke; indeed, it is surprising how much these excellent women will tolerate under pretense of bringing the lost sheep back to the fold by their indulgence.

"We reckoned without our constitutional government," said the grand equerry; "and Rosembray, Madame la Duchesse, will lose a great honor."

"We shall be more at our ease," said a tall thin old man, about seventy-five years of age, dressed in blue cloth, and wearing his hunting-cap by permission of the ladies. This personage, who closely resembled the Duc de Bourbon, was no less than the Prince de Cadignan, Master of the Hunt, and one of the last of the great French lords. Just as La Brière was endeavoring to slip behind the sofa and obtain a moment's intercourse with Modeste, a man of thirty-eight, short, fat, and very common in appearance, entered the room.

"My son, the Prince de Loudon," said the Duchesse de Verneuil to Modeste, who could not restrain the expression of amazement that overspread her young face on seeing the man who bore the historical name that the hero of La Vendée had rendered famous by his bravery and the martyrdom of his death.

"Gaspard," said the duchess, calling her son to her. The young prince came at once, and his mother continued, motioning to Modeste, "Mademoiselle de la Bastie, my son."

The heir presumptive, whose marriage with Desplein's only daughter had lately been arranged, bowed to the young girl without seeming struck, as his father had been, with her beauty. Modeste was thus enabled to compare the youth of to-day with the old age of a past epoch; for the old Prince de Cadignan had already said a few words which made her feel that he rendered as true a homage to womanhood as to royalty. The Duc de Rhétoré, the eldest son of the Duchesse de Chaulieu, chiefly remarkable for manners that were equally impertinent and free and easy, bowed to Modeste rather cavalierly. The reason of this contrast between the fathers and the sons is to be found, probably, in the fact that young men no longer feel themselves great beings, as their forefathers did, and they dispense with the duties of greatness, knowing well that they are now but the shadow of it. The fathers have still the inherent politeness of their vanished grandeur, like the mountain-tops still gilded by the sun when all is shadowy in the valley.

Ernest was at last able to slip a word into Modeste's ear, and she rose at once.

"My dear," said the duchess, thinking she was going to dress, and pulling a bell-rope, "they shall show you your apartment."

Ernest accompanied Modeste to the foot of the grand staircase, presenting the request of the luckless poet, and endeavoring to touch her feelings by describing Melchior's agony.

"You see, he loves—he is a captive who thought he could break his chain."

"Love in such a rabid seeker after fortune!" retorted Modeste.

"Mademoiselle, you are at the entrance of life; you do not know its defiles. The inconsistencies of a man who falls under the dominion of a woman much older than himself should be forgiven, for he is really not accountable. Think how many sacrifices Canalis has made to her. He has sown too much seed of that kind to resign the harvest; the duchess represents to him ten years of devotion and happiness. You made him forget all that, and unfortunately, he has more vanity than pride; he did not reflect on what he was losing until he met Madame de Chaulieu here to-day. If you really understood him, you would help him. He is a child, always mismanaging his life. You call him a seeker after fortune, but he seeks very badly; like all poets, he is the victim of sensations; he is childish, easily dazzled like a child by anything that shines, and pursuing its glitter. He used to love horses and pictures, and he craved fame—well, he sold his pictures to buy armor and old furniture of the Renaissance and Louis XV.; just now he is seeking political power. Admit that his hobbies are noble things."

"You have said enough," replied Modeste; then, seeing her father, whom she called with a motion of her head to give her his arm, she added, "come with me, and I will give you that scrap of paper; you shall carry it to the great man and assure him of my condescension to his wishes, but on one condition—you must thank him in my name for the pleasure I have taken in seeing one of the finest of the German plays performed in my honor. I have learned that Goethe's masterpiece is neither Faust nor Egmont—" and then, as Ernest looked at the malicious girl with a puzzled air, she continued: "It is Torquato Tasso! Tell Monsieur de Canalis to re-read it," she added smiling; "I particularly desire that you will repeat to your friend word for word what I say; for it is not an epigram, it is the justification of his conduct—with this

trifling difference, that he will, I trust, become more and more reasonable, thanks to the folly of his Eleonore."

The duchess's head-woman conducted Modeste and her father to their apartment, where Françoise Cochet had already put everything in order. The choice elegance of the rooms astonished the colonel, more especially after he heard from Francoise that there were thirty other apartments in the chateau decorated with the same taste.

"This is what I call the right kind of a country-house," said Modeste.

"The Comte de la Bastie must build you one like it," replied her father.

"Here, monsieur," said Modeste, giving the bit of paper to Ernest; "carry it to our friend and put him out of his misery."

The word *our* friend struck the young man's heart. He looked at Modeste to see if there was anything real in the community of interests which she seemed to admit, and she, understanding perfectly what his look meant, added, "Come, go at once, your friend is waiting."

La Brière colored excessively, and left the room in a state of doubt and anxiety less endurable than despair. The path that approaches happiness is, to the true lover, like the narrow way which Catholic poetry has well named the entrance to Paradise—a dark and gloomy passage, echoing with the last cries of earthly anguish.

An hour later the illustrious company were all assembled in the salon; some were playing whist, others conversing; the women had their embroideries in hand, and all were waiting the announcement of dinner. The Prince de Cadignan was drawing Monsieur Mignon out upon China, and his campaigns under the empire, and making him talk about the Portenduères, the L'Estorades, and the Maucombes, Provençal families; he blamed him for not seeking service, and assured him that nothing would be easier than to restore him to his rank as colonel of the Guard.

"A man of your birth and your fortune ought not to belong to the present Opposition," said the prince, smiling.

This society of distinguished persons not only pleased Modeste, but it enabled her to acquire, during her stay, a perfection of manners which without this revelation she would have lacked all her life. Show a clock to an embryo mechanic, and you reveal to him the whole mechanism; he thus develops the germs of his faculty which lie dormant within him. In like manner Modeste had the instinct to appropriate the distinctive qualities of Madame de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Chaulieu. For her, the sight of those women was an education; whereas a bourgeoise would merely have ridiculed their ways or made them absurd by clumsy imitation. A well-born, well-educated, and right-minded girl like Modeste fell naturally into *rapport* with these people, and saw at once the differences that separate the aristocratic world from the bourgeois, the provinces from the Faubourg Saint Germain; she caught the almost imperceptible shadings; in short, she perceived the grace of the *grande dame* without doubting that she could herself acquire it. She noticed also that her father and La Brière appeared infinitely better in this Olympus than Canalis. Ernest de la Brière, without ambitions, was able to be himself; while Melchior became, to use a vulgar expression, a mere toady, and courted the Prince de Loudon, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, or the Duc de Maufrigneuse, like a man not free to assert himself, as did Colonel Mignon, who was justly proud of his campaigns, and of the confidence of the Emperor Napoleon. Modeste took note of the strained efforts of the man of talent, who was always seeking some witticism that should raise a laugh, some clever speech, some compliment with which to flatter these grand personages, whom it was his interest to please. In a word, in Modeste's eyes the peacock plucked out his tail-feathers.

Toward the middle of the evening the young girl sat down with the grand equerry in a corner of the salon. She led him there purposely to end a suit which she could no longer encourage if she wished to retain her self-respect.

"Monsieur le Duc, if you really knew me," she said, "you would understand how deeply I am touched by your attentions. It is because of the profound respect I feel for your character, and the friendship which a soul like yours inspires in mine, that I cannot endure to wound your self-love. Before your arrival in Havre I loved sincerely, deeply, and forever, one who is worthy of being loved; my affection for him is still a secret; but I wish you to know—and in saying this I am more sincere than most young girls—that had I not already formed this voluntary attachment, you would have been my choice, for I recognize your noble and beautiful qualities. A few words which your aunt and sister have said to me as to your intentions lead me to make this frank avowal. If you think it desirable, a letter from my mother

shall recall me, on pretense of her illness, to-morrow morning before the hunt begins. Without your consent I do not choose to be present at a fête which I owe to your kindness, and where, if my secret should escape me, you might feel hurt and defrauded. You will ask me why I have come here at all. I could not withstand the invitation. Be generous enough not to reproach me for what was almost an irrepressible curiosity. But this is not the chief, nor the most delicate thing I have to say to you. You have firm friends in my father and myself—more so than perhaps you realize; and as my fortune was the first cause that brought you to me, I wish to say—but without intending to use it as a sedative to calm the grief which gallantry requires you to testify—that my father has thought over the affair of the marshes; his friend Dumay thinks your project feasible, and they have already taken steps to form a company. Gobenheim, Dumay, and my father have subscribed fifteen hundred thousand francs, and they undertake to get the rest from capitalists, who will feel it their interest to take up the matter. If I have not the honor of becoming the Duchesse d'Hérouville, I have almost the certainty of enabling you to choose her, free from all trammels in your choice, and in a higher sphere than mine. Oh! let me finish," she added, at a gesture from the duke.

"Judging by my nephew's emotion," whispered Mademoiselle d'Hérouville to her niece, "it is easy to see you have a sister."

"Monsieur le Duc, all this was settled in my mind on the day of our first ride, when I heard you deplore your situation. This is what I have wished to say to you. That day determined my future life. Though you did not make the conquest of a woman, you have at least gained faithful friends of Ingouville—if you will deign to accord us that title."

This little discourse was said with so much charm of soul that the tears came to the grand equerry's eyes; he seized her hand and kissed it.

"Stay during the hunt," he said; "my want of merit has accustomed me to these refusals: but while accepting your friendship and that of the colonel, you must let me satisfy myself, by the judgment of competent scientific men, that the draining of those marshes will be no risk to the company you speak of, before I agree to the generous offer of your friends. You are a noble girl, and though my heart aches to think I can only be your friend, I will glory in that title, and prove it to you at all times and in all places."

"At all events, Monsieur le Duc, let us keep our secret. My choice will not be known, unless I betray myself unwittingly, until after my mother's complete recovery. I should like our first blessing to come from her eyes."

XXIX.

"Ladies," said the Prince de Cadignan, as the guests were about to separate for the night, "I remember that several of you propose to follow the hounds with us to-morrow, and it becomes my duty to tell you that if you will be Dianas you must rise, like Diana, with the dawn The meet is for half-past eight o'clock. I have in the course of my life seen many women display greater courage than men, but for a few seconds only; and you will need a strong dose of resolution to keep you on horseback the whole day, with the exception of a halt for breakfast, which will be taken in the saddle, as it were. Are you still determined to show yourselves trained horsewomen?"

"Prince, it is necessary for me to do so," said Modeste, adroitly.

"I answer for myself," said the Duchesse de Chaulieu.

"And I for my daughter Diane; she is worthy of her name," added the prince. "So, then, you all persist in your intentions? However, I shall arrange, for the sake of Madame and Mademoiselle de Verneuil and others of the party who stay at home, to drive the stag to the further end of the pond."

"Make yourselves quite easy, mesdames," said the Prince de Loudon, when the Royal Huntsman had left the room; "that breakfast 'in the saddle' will take place under a comfortable tent."

The next day, at dawn, all signs gave promise of a glorious day. As the hunting party left the château, the Master of the Hunt, the Duc de Rhétoré, and the Prince de Loudon, who had no ladies to escort, rode in the advance, noticing the white masses of the château, with its rising chimneys relieved against the brilliant red-brown foliage which the trees in Normandy put on at the close of a fine autumn.

"The ladies are fortunate in their weather," remarked the Duc de Rhétoré.

"Oh, in spite of all their boasting," replied the Prince de Cadignan, "I think they will let us hunt without them!"

"So they might, if each had not a squire," said the duke.

At this moment the attention of these determined huntsmen—for the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré were of the race of Nimrod, and the best shots of the Faubourg Saint Germain—was attracted by a loud altercation; and they spurred their horses to an open space at the entrance of the forest of Rosembray, famous for its mossy turf, which was appointed for the meet. The cause of the quarrel was soon apparent. The Prince de Loudon, afflicted with anglomania, had brought out his own hunting establishment, which was exclusively Britannic, and placed it under orders of the Master of the Hunt. One of his men, a little Englishman — fair, pale, insolent, and phlegmatic, scarcely able to speak a word of French, and dressed with a neatness which distinguishes all Britons, even those of the lower classes — had posted himself on one side of this open space. John Barry wore a short frock-coat, buttoned tightly at the waist, made of scarlet cloth, with buttons bearing the De Verneuil arms, white leather breeches, top-boots, a striped waistcoat, and a collar and cape of black velvet. He held in his hand a small hunting-whip, and hanging to his wrist by a silken cord was a brass horn. This man, the first whipper-in, was accompanied by two thoroughbred dogs—foxhounds, white, with liver spots, long in the leg, fine in the muzzle, with slender heads, and little ears at their crests. The huntsman—famous in the English county from which the Prince de Loudon had obtained him at great cost—was in charge of an establishment of fifteen horses and sixty English hounds, which cost the Duc de Verneuil, who was nothing of a huntsman, but chose to indulge his son in this essentially royal taste, an enormous sum of money.

When he arrived upon the ground, John found himself forestalled by three other whippers-in, in charge of two of the royal packs of hounds, which had been brought there in carts. They were the three best huntsmen of the Prince de Cadignan, and presented, both in character and in their distinctively French costume, a marked contrast to the representative of insolent Albion. These favorites of the prince, each wearing full-brimmed, three-cornered hats, very flat and very wide-spreading, beneath which grinned their swarthy, tanned, and wrinkled faces, lighted by three pairs of twinkling eyes, were noticeably lean, sinewy, and vigorous, like men in whom sport had become a passion. All three were supplied with the immense horns of Dampierre, wound with green worsted cords, leaving only the brass tubes visible; but they controlled their dogs by the eye and voice. Those noble animals were far more faithful and submissive subjects than the human lieges whom the king was at that moment addressing; all were marked with white, black, or liver spots, each having as distinctive a countenance as the soldiers of Napoleon, their eyes flashing like diamonds at the slightest noise. One of them, brought from Poitou, was short in the back, deep in the shoulder, low-jointed, and lop-eared; the other, from England, white, fine as a greyhound, with no belly, small ears, and built for running. Both were young, impatient, and yelping eagerly, while the old hounds, on the contrary, covered with scars, lay quietly with their heads on their forepaws, and their ears to the earth like savages.

When they saw the Englishman, the royal dogs and huntsmen looked at each other as though they said, "If we cannot hunt by ourselves his majesty's service is insulted."

Beginning with jests, the quarrel presestly grew fiercer between Monsieur Jacquin la Roulie, the old French whipper-in, and John Barry, the young islander. The two princes guessed from afar the subject of the altercation, and the Master of the Hunt, setting spurs to his horse, brought it to an end by saying, in a voice of authority:

"Who drew the wood?"

"I, monseigneur," said the Englishman.

"Very good," replied the Prince de Cadignan, proceeding to take Barry's report.

Dogs and men became silent and respectful before the Royal Huntsman, as though each recognized his dignity as supreme. The prince laid out the day's work; for it is with a hunt as it is with a battle, and the Master of Charles X.'s hounds was the Napoleon of forests. Thanks to the admirable system he introduced into French venery, he was able to turn his thoughts exclusively to science and strategy. He now quietly assigned a special duty to the Prince de Loudon's establishment, that of driving the stag to water, when, as he expected, the royal hounds should have sent it into the crown forest which outlined the horizon directly in front of the chateau. The prince knew well how to soothe the self-love of his old huntsmen by giving them the most arduous part of the work, and also that of the Englishman, whom he employed at his own specialty, affording him a chance to show the fleetness of his horses and dogs in the open. The two

national systems were thus face to face and allowed to do their best under each other's eyes.

"Does monseigneur wish us to wait any longer?" said La Roulie, respectfully.

"I know what you mean, old friend," said the prince. "It is late, but—"

"Here come the ladies," said the second whipper-in. At that moment the cavalcade of sixteen riders was seen to approach, at the head of which were the green veils of the four ladies. Modeste, accompanied by her father, the grand equerry, and La Brière, was in the advance, beside the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse whom the Vicomte de Sérizy escorted. Behind them rode the Duchesse de Chaulieu, flanked by Canalis, on whom she was smiling without a trace of rancor. When they had reached the open space where the huntsmen with their red coats and brass bugles, surrounded by the hounds, made a picture worthy of Van der Meulen, the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who, in spite of her embonpoint, sat her horse admirably, rode up to Modeste, finding it best for her dignity not to avoid that young person, to whom on the previous evening she had not spoken a word.

When the Master of the Hunt finished his compliments to the ladies on their amazing punctuality, Eleonore deigned to observe the magnificent whip which sparkled in Modeste's little hand, and graciously asked leave to look at it.

"I have never seen anything of the kind more beautiful," she said, showing it to Diane de Maufrigneuse. "It is in keeping with its possessor," she added, returning it to Modeste.

"You must admit, Madame la Duchesse," answered Mademoiselle de la Bastie with a tender and malicious glance at La Brière, "that it is a rather strange gift from the hand of a future husband."

"I should take it," said Madame de Maufrigneuse, "as a declaration of my rights, in remembrance of Louis XIV."

La Brière's eyes were suffused, and for a moment he dropped his reins; but a second glance from Modeste ordered him not to betray his happiness. The hunt now began.

The Duc d'Hérouville took occasion to say in a low voice to his fortunate rival: "Monsieur, I hope that you will make your wife happy; if I can be useful to you in any way, command my services; I should be only too glad to contribute to the happiness of so charming a pair."

This great day, in which such vast interests of heart and fortune were decided, caused but one anxiety to the Master of the Hunt—namely, whether or not the stag would cross the pond and be killed on the lawn before the house; for huntsmen of his caliber are like great chess-players who can predict a checkmate under certain circumstances. The happy old man succeeded to the height of his wishes; the run was magnificent, and the ladies released him from his attendance upon them for the hunt of the next day but one—which, however, turned out to be rainy.

The Duc de Verneuil's guests stayed five days at Rosembray. On the last day the "Gazette de France" announced the appointment of Monsieur le Baron de Canalis to the rank of commander of the Legion of Honor, and to the post of minister at Carlsruhe.

When, early in the month of December, Madame de la Bastie, operated upon by Desplein, recovered her sight and saw Ernest de la Brière for the first time, she pressed Modeste's hand and whispered in her ear, "He would have been my own choice."

Toward the last of February all the deeds for the estates in Provence were signed by Latournelle, and about that time the family of La Bastie obtained the marked honor of the king's signature to the marriage contract and to the ordinance transmitting their title and arms to La Brière, who henceforth took the name of La Brière-La Bastie. The estate of La Bastie was entailed by letters-patent issued about the end of April. La Brière's witnesses on the occasion of his marriage were Canalis and the minister whom he had served for five years as secretary. Those of the bride were the Duc d'Hérouville and Desplein, whom the Mignons rewarded with gratitude, as well as more substantial proofs of their regard.

If we again meet Monsieur and Madame de La Brière-La Bastie, those who have the eyes to see will then behold how sweet, how easy, is the marriage yoke with an educated and intelligent woman; for Modeste is the pride and the happiness of her husband, her family and all who surround her.

END OF VOLUME ONE.